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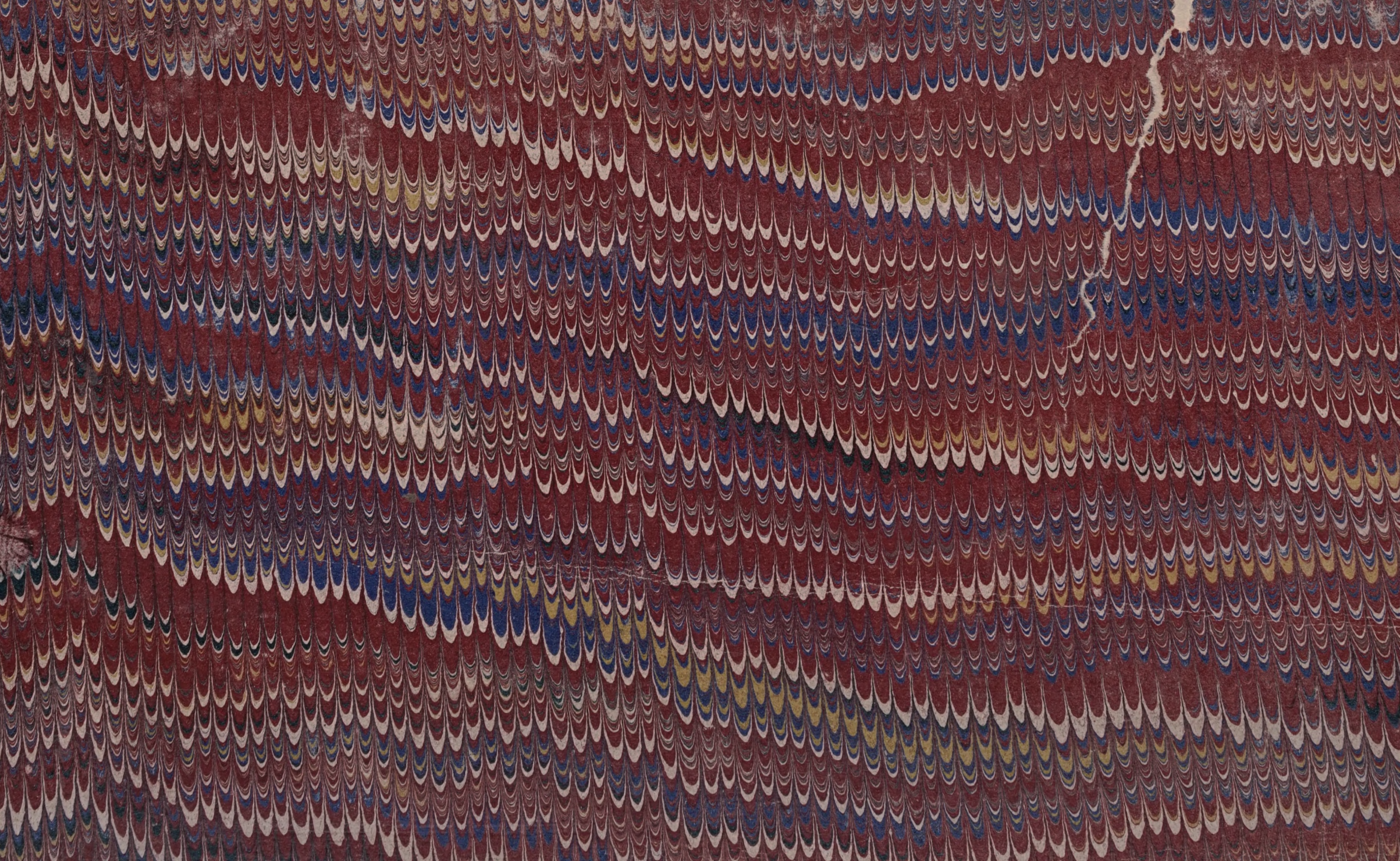

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THE Master of the Mine.

BY

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

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NEW YORK
George Munro
PUBLISHER

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THE

MASTER OF THE MINE.

By ROBERT BUCHANAN.

The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
He saw the giant Sea above his head.
—*Keats' Endymion.*

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THE MASTER OF THE MINE.

CHAPTER I.

A PROLOGUE, AND THE FIRST SCENE.

In a large wooden building not far from the sea-shore, a building attached as school-house to "Munster's Boarding Academy for Young Gentlemen," I, Hugh Trelawney, then scarcely ten years old, was moping alone. I had only arrived two days before from London, where I had parted from my father, a traveling lecturer in the cause of what was then known as the New Moral World. My mother had long been dead, and I had led a somewhat neglected life, sometimes accompanying my father on his wanderings, more often being left to the care, or carelessness, of strangers. At last I had been sent to Southampton to complete a very perfunctory education.

It was afternoon, and a half-holiday; my new school-fellows were playing close by. For myself, I was too used to loneliness to be very miserable. I merely felt an outcast for the time being, and took no interest whatever in my new associations.

As I sat thus, I must have fallen into a brown study, from which a slight sound startled me.

Looking up, I met the flash of two dark eyes which were intently regarding me.

"Are you the new boy?" said a clear voice.

I nodded, and stared at my interrogator, a girl of about my own age, whose black eyebrows were knitted in a way very curious in so young a child as she seemed.

Her arms and neck were bare, and she was fondling a kitten, whose bright eyes and lissom movements seemed to have something in common with her own beauty. I noticed, too, that she wore ear-rings, and that they were very bright and glistening.

"What is your name?" she continued, in the same clear questioning tone, altogether with the manner of a superior who was not to be trifled with.

"Hugh."

"Hugh what?"

"Hugh Trelawney."

I felt somewhat overawed by the tone of the little lady, who, to my boyish eyes, seemed much more my senior than she was in reality.

She continued to regard me with the same keen scrutiny, and then said, looking at my attire,

"Who is *dead?*"

I still wore black for my mother, and, with a somewhat faltering voice, I told her so.

She did not seem surprised, and expressed no sympathy; but, walking to the school room window, looked out, saying, "Why don't you go out and play with the other boys?"

"I don't care about play. I am tired."

"Tired with what?" she questioned, quickly.

I made no reply, for I was not prepared for the question. I had meant to imply that I was low-spirited and dull, but had not cared to confess so much in so many words.

She understood me, however, and, although she seemed indifferent to my condition, troubled me with no more questions.

Glad to direct her attention from myself, for her bright eyes troubled me and made me feel ashamed, I stooped down and stroked the kitten, which she had placed upon the floor. Even as I did so, I could feel her eyes still fixed upon me; but when I looked up again with an annoyed expression, she turned her eyes away, and laughed.

This emboldened me, and I began to question in my turn.

"Are you the school-master's daughter?"

At this she laughed the more—so brightly and pleasantly, with such a good-humored sympathy with my blunder, that my first impression of her began to improve, and I saw that, besides being a rather imperious, she was a very pretty, young lady.

"Why do you laugh?" I remarked.

"At you," she replied; "because you take me for Mr. Munster's child. I am a stranger here, like yourself. My people live far away in South America, and are very rich. My mother is dead, and I don't remember her. My father has sent me here to be taught; but I shall soon go back to him. Have *you* a father?" she added, quickly.

I nodded.

"Is he kind to you, and was it he that sent you to school?" she asked.

But without waiting for my reply to her questions, she continued, "*My* father cried when I left him, though he is a great man, and when he gave me these ear-rings, he told me my mother had worn them before me, and he kissed them. We live far away from here, in a brighter place. Don't you *hate* England?"

This was rather a startling query, but being in a state of mind bordering on disgust for life in general, I readily assented. Her eyes gleamed.

"It is a dreary place," she cried: "dull and miserable, and it rains nearly every day. But it is different where I come from. It is always bright there, and there are flowers everywhere, and the trees are full of fruit; and there are bright insects, and beautiful snakes without stings, that can be taught to twine round your neck, and feed out of your hand."

As she spoke thus, indeed, it seemed that I was transported to the land of which she spoke: her eyes were so sparkling, her face so bright and sunny, her form so foreign in its slender beauty—and her ear-rings glistened, and her beautiful ivory teeth gleamed—and I saw her walking in that land, a wonder among all wonders there, with fruits and flowers over her head, and brilliant insects floating round her, and luminous snakes gleaming harmless in her path, and dusky slaves waiting upon her and doing her courtesies. For it must be borne in mind that I had been a studious boy, fond of reading wild books of travel and adventure, and of picturing in my mind the wonders of foreign lands. Much that I had fancied of dwellers in distant regions was realized in the face I now beheld for the first time.

At what age is a beautiful human creature—and more particularly one belonging to the gentler sex—insensible to admiration? I am certain that my new friend perceived mine, and that it did not displease her. It was, at any rate, genuine homage, quietly expressed, almost against my will, in the pleased yet timid glances of my eyes.

When she next spoke, her clear, impetuous tone was greatly changed and softened, and a kinder light dwelt on her face.

"If you will come with me," she said, "I will show you the place. There is not much to see but the garden, and that I like well enough. Will you come?"

I rose awkwardly, as if at a word of command; and, taking my

cap from the peg where it hung, swung it in my hand as I followed her to the door.

Ashamed, yet pleased, to be chaperoned by a girl, I wondered what my school-fellows would think of it.

Close to the school-room was the playground, or rather the capacious piece of lawn, dignified by that name.

My school-fellows were playing cricket thereon. They paid no attention to me as I passed, but looked at my companion with a curious and not too friendly expression. She, for her part, passed along imperiously, without deigning to cast a single look in their direction; and I noticed that her look had changed again, and that her dark brows were knitted with the former unpleasant expression. She said nothing, however, for some minutes.

Our first visit was to the top of a high knoll behind the house, whence we could see the surrounding country, and, some miles to the southward, the distant sea, with a white frost of billows on the edge of liver-colored sands.

It was a quiet, sunless day; but far away there were gleams of watery light on the white sails of ships passing by under full canvas.

The girl looked seaward at the passing sails with much the same peculiar expression she had worn on our first encounter.

How could I fathom her thoughts? I guessed she was thinking of her home, but I was wrong.

"Are you *clever?*" she asked, suddenly

This was a question which I, as a modest boy, felt totally unprepared to answer. I looked at the ground, peeped at her, and laughed. Her expression did not change.

"I mean, do you know much," she continued, in explanation. "Have you learned much before?"

I explained to her, as well as possible, that my acquirements were very slender indeed, and merely consisted of the stray crumbs of knowledge which I had been enabled to pick up at day-schools in the various towns where my father had resided during my childhood. In point of fact, I was a thoroughly uncultivated little boy, and had never been crammed with the solid pabulum so much in vogue at our public schools. I could read and write, of course, and knew arithmetic as far as the rule of three, and had got through the first four declensions in the Latin grammar; but all was a chaos, and I had no accomplishments.

I did not explain all this to my interrogator; for I was too proud.

"If you are not clever, and know so little," observed the girl,

thoughtfully, "take care of the other boys. Why don't you make friends with them? Why do you like to sit alone, and be sullen? If there were girls here, I should make friends, I know. But boys are different; they have cruel ways, and they hate each other."

All this was said in a tone rather of reflection than of conversation; and she still kept her eyes on the distant ships, as if from some secret source far away the current of her thoughts was flowing.

"The boys hate *me*," she pursued, "because they think me proud. I am not proud, but I am quicker and cleverer than they are, and I come from a better place. I beat them in the class and at all things, except figures; and I have helped the biggest of them sometimes, when they were too stupid to understand."

All this was a revelation to me. Until that moment I had never supposed that my companion's place was among the common scholars. During my first two days in school she had been absent —a circumstance which she soon explained to me without any questioning.

"I have been away on a visit, and only returned this morning. I do not come to school every day, because I have headaches, and my father will only have me learn when I please. Now let us go down and look at the garden. There are fruit bushes there, and some of the fruit is ripe."

Still respectful and submissive, I followed, and we were soon wandering side by side in the quiet garden in the neighborhood of the school-house. Ever and anon, as we walked, I heard the shouts and cries of my playmates; but they were wafted to me as from some forsaken life.

A spell had been passed upon me, and I was in a dream. As I write, the dream surrounds me still. Years ebb backward, clouds part, the old horizons come nearer and nearer, and I am again wandering in the quiet shade of trees with the shining young face at my side. I can no longer recall looks and words. All becomes a tremor. I see the one face only, but the voice becomes inarticulate.

What I remember last is a sudden sound dissolving a spell. A bell rung loudly from the house, and my companion uttered an exclamation—

"That is the bell for tea," she exclaimed. "You had better go."

"And she ran before me up the path. She was nearly out of sight among the garden bushes when, urged by curiosity, I took courage, and called after her.

"What is your name?" I cried.

She nodded back with a smile.

"Madeline," she replied. "Madeline Graham." With that she was gone. For a moment, I stood bewildered, and then, with quite a new light in my eyes, I made the best of my way into the house, and joined the boys at the tea-table.

Although Mrs. Munster presided at the board, my new friend did not appear, and as I munched my bread-and-butter, I thought of her face with a kind of dreamy pleasure, delicious to recall even now.

CHAPTER II.

NEMESIS INTERVENES.

In my hasty sketch of school, I have made little or no mention of the schoolmaster and his wife. Indeed, so far as my present retrospection is concerned, they are nonentities; and they form part of my story only in so much as they affected my relations with the leading actress in the life drama to which these chapters are the prelude.

Munster was a feeble-looking but talented little man, with a very high forehead, which he was constantly mopping with cold water, to subdue inordinate headaches; and Mrs. Munster was a kind creature, with an enormous respect for her lord, and quite a motherly interest in us boys, she having no children of her own.

The manner of these good people was kind toward all; but their treatment of Madeline Graham was blended with a sense of restraint almost bordering on fear. It was obvious that they had been instructed to treat her with more than ordinary solicitude, and it was equally obvious that they were liberally paid for so doing.

When she broke from all restraint, as was the case occasionally, their concern for her personal welfare was not unmixed with a fear lest open rupture might rob them of the installments derived from their wealthiest pupil. Madeline, on her side, was perfectly conscious of this; but, in justice it must be said, that she seldom took undue advantage of her position.

The more I saw of Madeline Graham, the more I observed her manners and general bearing, the more the thought of her possessed me, and blended with my quietest dreams.

After that first interview, she held somewhat aloof for many days, but her eyes were constantly watching me in school and at meals, though without any approach to further familiarity. She

seemed desirous of keeping me at a distance, for reasons which I could not possible penetrate.

Gradually, however, we came together again.

Madeline had not exaggerated when she boasted of excelling the other scholars in brightness and intelligence. Her memory was extraordinary, and tasks which taxed all the energies of boyhood were easily mastered by her quick and restless brain.

She was taught with the rest of us in the open school, and was generally at the head of her class.

It so happened that I myself, although in many things dull and indifferent, was also gifted with a memory of uncommon tenacity. In all tasks which demanded the exercise of this function I took a foremost place. Madeline was my most formidable rival, and we began, quietly at first, but afterward with energy, to fight for the mastery.

The competition, instead of severing, brought us closer to each other.

Madeline respected the spirit which sometimes subdued her, and I, for my part, loved her the better for the humanizing touches of passion which my victory frequently awakened.

We had been friends six months, the quiet round of school life had become familiar and pleasant to me, when, one day, at breakfast, I noticed that Munster wore a very troubled expression, as he broke open the largest of a number of letters lying before him. The envelope was of peculiar yellow paper, and the post-mark looked foreign.

Madeline, who sat close by, turned white and eager, and her great eyes fixed themselves on the strange missive.

Within the letter to Munster, was a smaller one, which he handed to Madeline silently.

With impetuous eagerness, she opened and read it. It was very short. As she glanced over it, her bosom rose and fell, her eyes brightened and filled with tears.

To hide her trouble, she rose and left the room.

Meanwhile, Munster evinced similar surprise and consternation. He bit his lips as he read his letter, and passed his hand nervously through his hair. Then, with a significant look, he passed the letter to his wife, who, reading it, in her turn became similarly troubled.

As he passed the letter to her, something dropped rustling to the floor, and Munster, looking rather red, stooped and picked it up. It

was a curiously printed paper, and looked like the note of some foreign bank.

Breakfast was finished—school began—but Madeline did not appear. Munster still looked fidgety and annoyed.

As for myself, I was torn by sensations to which my little heart had hitherto been a stranger. I felt on the brink of a precipice, down which all that I held dear was disappearing. I could not eat, I could not say my tasks, I could not think. What was going to happen? I asked myself wildly again and again.

At two o'clock, when we were summoned to dinner, no sight of Madeline. But by this time some hint of the truth was forcing itself upon me.

A whisper had passed round the school—"Madeline Graham is going away!"

Going away? Whither? To that far-distant, that mysterious land whence she had come, and whither I might never follow her? Going away forever! Passing westward, and taking with her all that made my young life beautiful and happy. Could this be?

I shall never forget the agony of that day. I have had blows since, but none harder. I have felt desolation since, but none deeper.

After school, I hung round the house, haunted every spot where she might be expected to appear. I yearned to hear the truth from her own lips I paced to and fro like a criminal awaiting his sentence. I could not bear the sight of the other boys, but kept to the secret places, moody and distracted.

Quite late in the evening, I wandered into the garden—a favorite resort of ours. The sun had sunk, but his slowly fading light was still tinting the quiet place, and the shadows of trees and bushes were still distinct upon the ground.

I had not been here long when I heard the foot I knew, and, turning, I beheld my little friend hastening toward me.

She was pale, but otherwise composed, and said at once,

"Have you heard that I am going away?"

I stammered something, I know not what; it must have been inaudible. I had a sharp, choking sensation, and drooped my looks from hers.

"I have just got a letter from my father. I am to go back home immediately. See!"

So saying, she placed in my hand the small inclosure which she had received from Munster in the morning. Seeing my puzzled look, she exclaimed:

"You may read it."

I did read it, in one quick, painful glance. I remember every word of it now. It was written in a large, bold hand, and ran as follows:

"MY OWN DARLING LITTLE MADELINE,—You will hear from the good people with whom you are living that a great change has taken place, and that you must come home at once. Wish a kind good-bye to all your friends in England; perhaps you may never see them again. Come without delay to your loving father,

"RODERICK GRAHAM."

Prepared as I had been for the blow, it did not fall so heavily as it might have done. I struggled with my feelings, and choked down a violent tendency to cry.

She perceived my consternation, and was herself moved. But there was a quick, strange light in her eyes, as if she were contemplating something far away.

"I have prayed many a night that my father would send for me," she said, thoughtfully; "and now he has done so, I scarcely feel glad. I am afraid there is something wrong at home. Shall you be sorry, Hugh, when I go?"

At this open question I broke down utterly, and burst into a violent sob.

She put her hands in mine, and looked earnestly into my face.

"I thought you would be sorry. None of them will miss me so much as you. We have been great friends; I never thought I could be such friends with a boy. I shall tell my father of you, and he will like you, too. Will you kiss me, Hugh, and say good-bye?"

I could not answer for tears; but I put my arms round her neck, and I did kiss her—a pure, true, loving boy's kiss, worth a million of the kisses men buy or steal in the broad world.

My tears moistened her cheek as I did so, but she did not cry herself.

She was altogther calm and superior, bowing down to my boyhood, compassionating and cherishing me; but in all possibility sharing little of my intense personal passion. She was nearer womanhood than I to manhood (girls always are more mature than boys); and she took my worship in gentle state. A queen, kissed by a loyal subject, could not offer her cheek more royally than little Madeline offered her cheek to me.

Yet her manner was full of strong affection, too. She would miss me, I felt sure.

In the midst of my agony, I found words to inquire how soon our dreaded parting was to take place. What was my astonishment to hear that she was going to leave Munster's at once.

"There is a ship to sail in two days, and I must go away to Liverpool to-morrow, early in the morning. My poor father! There is something very wrong indeed, and it will be many a week before we meet, though the ship should sail ever so fast."

As I write, recollection darkens, the sun sinks behind the little garden; the little shape fades away, and it is dark night. I seem to remember no more.

But what is this that gleams up before me?

It is the faint gray light of dawn. I have been in a very disturbed sleep, and am awakened by a harsh sound in the distance. It is the sound of carriage wheels.

I start up; it is daylight.

I hear a hum of voices in the house below. Without awakening any of my companions in the room, I creep to the window, and look out.

How chilly looks the cold damp world outside! How pitiless and cold lie the dews on the leaves all around! I shiver, and my heart aches.

A traveling-carriage stands at the door, and a sleepy-eyed coachman yawns on the box.

Hush! yonder from the house-porch comes Mrs. Munster, and by her side the little figure that I love.

The proud spirit is broken this morning, and the little eyes look soft and wet. Madeline clings to her protectress, and nods adieu to the servants, who flock around to bid her farewell.

She does not look this way. Does she think at all of the poor friendless boy whose heart she has filled with her beauty, and whose eyes are watching her so wildly from the curtained bedroom window up above?

The coachman cracks his whip, the horses break into a trot, the little one leans out, and waves her handkerchief until the carriage rounds the corner, and is hid from view.

Madeline! Little Madeline!

I have fallen upon my knees by my bedside, and am passionately kissing the lock of hair I begged from her last night. My heart seems breaking. All the world has grown dark for me in a moment.

To what new trouble is this that I am about to waken, now that the one star of my life's dawn has faded away?

CHAPTER III.

AFTER TEN YEARS, I BEGIN LIFE IN EARNEST.

THE prologue over, the drama of my life begins. There is always a prologue of some sort, in which the keynote of life is generally struck for good or evil, pleasure or pain. Mine is the episode of Little Madeline. Much of the spirit of what has been told will survive in the events which I am now about to narrate.

Madeline Graham faded at once and forever out of my boyish existence. I neither saw nor heard from her directly; but some months after her arrival in her distant home, there arrived a wonderful parcel, full of dried fruits, nuts, and other foreign edibles, addressed, in the hand I knew, to "Master Hugh Trelawney," at Munster's. My school-mates laughed wildly on its arrival. I tore it open, expecting to find some message in writing, showing me that I was not forgotten. There was not a line. With a somewhat heavy heart, I distributed the more perishable fruits among my school-mates, reserving a very little for myself—for I had no heart to eat. I stored up many of the nuts in my trunk, till they were quite moldy and rotten. When I was obliged to throw them away, I seemed to cast away at the same moment all my hope of seeing my dear little love again.

No other message—no other gift—ever came; though I wrote, in my round, boyish hand, a little letter of thanks and kind wishes. All grew silent. Little Madeline might be lying in her grave, far over the lonely waters, for aught I knew to the contrary.

I remained at Munster's until I was fourteen. In all these years I never forgot Madeline, never ceased to mention her name every night when I prayed by my bedside, never relinquished the thought of some day sailing across the ocean, and looking on the dear bright face again.

This intense and solitary passion became, if I may so express it, the secret strength of my life. It brightened the coarse and indigent experience of school-life, filled it with tender and mysterious meanings and associations; it made me inquiring and tender, instead of hard and mean; it determined my tastes in favor of beauty, and made me reverence true womanhood wherever I saw it. In a word, it gave my too commonplace experience just the coloring of

romance it needed, and made the dry reality of life blossom with simple poetry, in a dim religious light from far away.

What wonder, then, if, at fourteen, I found myself reading imaginative books and writing verses—of which early compositions, be certain, Madeline was the chief and never-wearying theme.

I had taken tolerable advantage of Munster's tuition, and was sufficiently well grounded in the details of an ordinary English education. I had, moreover, a smattering of Latin, which, in my after struggle for subsistence, turned out very useful. I should have progressed still further under the care of my school-master, but at this period my father died, and I found myself cast upon the world.

It is not my purpose—it is unnecessary—to enlarge on my own private history, and I shall touch upon it merely in so far as it affects the strange incidents in which I afterward became an actor. Things were at this point when I one morning received the startling intelligence that my father was dead, and that I was left alone in all the world. The first feeling which the news produced in me was one of very confused and dubious sorrow. Of late years, I had seen very little of my father. Since I had come to Munster's I had been left there, never even going home for my holidays as other boys did. Munster's was my home, and to all intents and purposes Mr. and Mrs. Munster were a father and mother to me. Still, for all that, the knowledge that I had a father in some remote quarter of the globe, who paid for my maintenance, and came to Munster's about once in six or eight months to spend an hour with me, had been a source of some satisfaction, and caused me now, for a short time at least, to deplore his loss.

Then came other and more complicated thoughts. If I had no longer a father to pay for my maintenance, what was to become of me; for, as far as I knew, I had no other relation in the world? Puzzled by these thoughts, and seeing no solution to them, I could do nothing but wait in eagerness and dread for what was to follow.

The next morning, when I was dressing, Mrs. Munster came into my bedroom and handed me a jacket with a crape band on the left arm; she also pointed to a cap which she had brought in with her, and said,

"You must wear this one now, Hugh."

Then she turned, bent her kindly eyes upon me, and kissed my forehead and murmured, "my poor boy."

I ventured to inquire whether I was to see my poor father in his

coffin or to follow him to the grave. The tears came into the woman's eyes, and she took my hand.

"You will never see him again," she said; "never. He died in America, and was buried before we received the news. But you are a brave boy," she added, "and must not grieve. It is sad for you, my dear; but trouble is sure to come sooner or later. If it comes when one is young, so much the better, for one is better able to bear it."

"Mrs. Munster," I said, piteously, "what is to become of me?"

The good lady shook her head.

"I don't know, my dear," she replied; "your poor father has not left you a sixpence. Hugh," she added, suddenly, "have you any relations?"

"No," I replied, "not one."

"Are you sure?" she continued. "Think, my dear."

I did think, but it was of no use. My brain would not conjure up one being to whom I could possibly lay any claim.

"No uncles, or aunts or cousins?" persisted Mrs. Munster; when suddenly I exclaimed—

"Yes, Mrs. Munster; now I remember, I've got an aunt. At least, I *had* an aunt; but she may be dead, like father."

"Let us hope not," said Mrs. Munster. "Well, my dear, tell me what she is like, and where she is to be found."

"I don't know what she is like," I replied. "I never saw her."

"Never saw her?"

"No; she never came near us; but I've heard father speak about her. She was my mother's sister, and her name is Martha Pendragon, and she lives at Cornwall."

"Martha Pendragon," repeated Mrs. Munster. "Is she married?"

I reflected for a moment, then I remembered having seen letters addressed to "Mrs. Pendragon," and I said as much.

"And where does she live?"

"St. Gurlott's, Cornwall."

Mrs. Munster wrote it down.

"'Mrs. Martha Pendragon, St. Gurlott's, Cornwall.' It looks promising, as I dare say St. Gurlott's is a very small place. Make yourself as contented as you can for a few days, my dear. I will write to the lady and ask her what she means to do."

I could do nothing else but wait, and I accordingly did so; though I found it utterly impossible to take Mrs. Munster's advice, and preserve a contented frame of mind.

My exceedingly hazy recollections of my aunt's communications

were by no means such as to inspire confidence. I began to ask myself, for the first time, why it was she had never been permitted to visit my mother in her home; why my mother, who was evidently fond of her sister, had never made a journey into Cornwall to see her; and, above all, why my aunt had never come to visit my own mother when she was dying? Thus I speculated for four days, at the end of that time I saw Mrs Munster receive a letter, open it, read it, and glance strangely at me.

"It is from your aunt, my dear," she said; then, looking at the letter again, she added: "She *is* your aunt, I suppose?"

"From Mrs. Pendragon?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied, with a strange smile, "from your Aunt Martha."

I wanted to hear more, but no more came. Mrs. Munster again turned her attention to the letter, and began studying it as intently as if she were carefully working out some abstruse mathematical problem. Presently, her husband came into the room, and she handed him the letter. My curiosity received a fresh stimulus when I saw him start at sight of it, read it twice, and then glance, as I thought, half pityingly at me.

"I suppose it's all right," he said, turning to his wife; "the boy must go."

She nodded her head thoughtfully.

"It seems a pity, doesn't it, after the education he has had?" she said to her husband; then, turning to me, she added, "Let me see, Hugh, how old are you now?"

I replied that I was fourteen.

"And are you sure you have no *other* relations except this—this Aunt Martha as she calls herself?"

I replied that during the last few days I had been racking my brain incessantly on that subject, but without avail.

"Well," she said, "I suppose your aunt Martha is better than nobody, my dear—she seems a good-natured sort of person, and is quite willing to give you a home; but it seems a pity to take you from school before your education is complete, and if we could find another relation who would let you stay here it would be so much better for you. I will write again to your aunt, she may know of some one though you do not—your father's relations for instance; but if she does not—why, the only thing you can do is to go to Cornwall."

I accordingly had to wait a few more days, at the end of which time another letter was received from my mysterious relative. This

time it failed to bring with it disgust or amazement, and conveyed only disappointment.

"Your aunt tells me she is your only relative on your mother's side," said Mrs. Munster, "and your father's family she knows nothing about. She has fixed Thursday as the day on which you are to go to her, therefore, my dear child, I see no help for it; you must leave us!"

Thus it was settled. On the Thursday morning I, accompanied by my small stock of luggage, started on my travels, and saw the last of Munster's.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN RUDD, POET AND CARRIER.

MUNSTER'S was situated in the suburbs of Southampton. It was arranged, therefore, that I should journey by a small steamer as far as Falmouth, and thence by road to St. Gurlott's-on-Sea. I was conducted to the boat by Mr. Munster. On arriving at Falmouth, after an uneventful passage, I was met on board by a rough-looking person, who informed me that he had been deputed by "Missus Pendragon" to convey me and my belongings to St. Gurlott's.

What manner of man he was I could scarcely tell, beyond realizing the fact that he was of tremendous height, that he wore a white beaver hat, and that his figure was wrapped in an enormous frieze coat which reached to his ankles. He gave a glance at me, and then said in a peculiar pipy voice—

"Come, lad, gie's the tip about your boxes, and we'll move on; the mare's got a journey afore 'un, and we'm be t nawt be late!"

I moved aft, and pointed out to him my little trunk. He looked at it in much the same way as a giant might look at a pebble, put it quietly under his arm, and moved off again, inviting me to follow. We crossed the gangway, and came on to the quay. Here we found a large van, and a fat sleepy-looking roan horse. The wagon was roofed with black tarpaulin, and on the side was painted, in large white letters,

"JOHN RUDD, CARRIER, ST. GURLOTT'S."

On coming up to the vehicle, my conductor paused and disposed of my trunk, then, turning to me with a "Come, young master, jump in," he gave me a lift which summarily placed me inside and on the top of my box; then, before I had time to recover myself, I felt that the wagon was jolting along.

What the day was like, and what sort of a prospect we were passing through, I had not the remotest idea; the tarpaulin and the enormous figure of the driver completely shutting me in from the world. I waited for awhile, thinking, perhaps, my companion might turn communicative and make some suggestion as to my better disposal; but none came. He sat like a log, and, beyond a few disjointed exclamations to the horse, uttered not a sound.

As he evidently had no intention whatever of taking the slightest further notice of me, I thought it best to approach him. I accordingly shouted "Hi!" several times and gave him a few vigorous pokes in the back; but neither of these attempts producing the slightest effect, I concluded he must be asleep. I accordingly swung off the van behind, and, running beside the horse, hulloed to him from the road.

This trick told better. Mr. Rudd, who seemed, indeed, to have become oblivious of the world, gradually turned his face toward me and gazed at me for a time with a vacuous stare. Then he pulled up the horse with a jerk.

"The Lord preserve 'ee!" he said, "what's the lad doin' thar?"

I explained that I had swung out of the wagon, because it was not pleasant inside, and added,

"Have you got room up there for two, Mr. Rudd?"

Instead of replying to my question, he gave a chuckle, and said,

"You'm a smart 'un: Mr. Rudd, eh? Now, haw did you come to knaw that thar', young master, eh?"

I explained that I had concluded from his appearance that he must be the master of the van, upon which "John Rudd" was painted; but he only chuckled again and piped:

"You'm a little 'un to be such a scholard!"

As I saw he was about to become fossilized again, I hastened to repeat my former question. Mr. Rudd gazed abstractedly at the seat and then at me.

"Mayn't I come up," I said, "it's so close inside the van, and I would rather ride beside you, Mr. Rudd?" Then, without giving him time for a refusal, I leaped up and nestled beside him.

Mr. Rudd made no protest—he simply said, "Move on, mare," and the mare moved on forthwith.

We had left Falmouth behind us, and were moving cumbrously along the high-road. Looking to the right and to the left I could see nothing but undulating sweeps of land, bleak and barren, with the stony highway stretching before us, and winding about, serpent fashion, until it was lost to view. We were traveling west-

ward, evidently, and, as far as prospect went, we might be going forward into the Desert. There was not a cart or a horse or human being to be seen anywhere; and the only sound was the rattle of the wagon, as it passed along over the rough road.

It was past midday, and the sun was as hot as it had been any day that summer. As I felt it scorching my face and head, I looked at my companion, and marveled again. His huge ulster-coat was buttoned up to his chin, and his great round face was shaded by his broad felt hat. He was by no means a bad-looking man, and he was still young—only five-and-thirty, or thereabouts. His skin was tanned and weather-beaten, and his eyes were fixed upon the mare with his habitual dreamy stare.

Finding it was useless to expect him to talk, I sat for a time quietly by his side, watching, with some amount of interest, the rough and stony track we were following; then, when he had covered a mile or so, the mare went along at a walk, and I leaped lightly into the road and kept pace beside her.

My change of position once more aroused my companion from his trance, he turned his eye slowly upon me, and said,

"I reckon you knaw a deal?"

I replied, modestly, that I knew a thing or two.

"I wonder naw," he said, "whether you can *write?*"

I answered with some decision that I certainly could, at which I thought his face fell.

"Poetry, naw?" he inquired. "Warses, like?"

I replied that though I was able to write a capital hand, I had only once or twice aspired to original composition, at which he chuckled delightedly; then, fixing his eyes with a fascinated glare upon my face, he repeated in a high shrill voice the following lines:—

> "To Missus Pendragon, who's always so pleasant,
> John Rudd, of St. Gurlott's, brings this little present.
> May her life be as sweet as best sugar can be,
> And the only hot water be mixed wi' her tea!

"What do you think o' that?" he asked, anxiously.

"Very good," I replied. "Where did you read it? In a book?"

"I didn't read 'un, master, I *wrote* 'un," he replied. "Leastways, I should ha' wrote 'un if I *could* write. Naw, you 'm a smart chap, p'r'aps you could take them lines down?"

"Of course I could," I replied. Whereupon I produced a pencil from my waistcoat pocket, and, asking Mr. Rudd to repeat the verse again, I transcribed it on the back of an old letter.

When I handed up the paper to Mr. Rudd, his face became positively gleeful.

"You're a smart chap," he repeated, "nowt much doubt o' that."

"Do you make *much* poetry?" I asked.

He nodded his head slowly.

"A goodish bit," he replied; "leastways, I should if I'd allus a smart 'un like you at hand to take 'un down. But I'm naw hand at setting dawn at it, and it dawn't allus keep in my head. 'Tis a gift," he continued. "It all began when I were a lad, a-drivin' up and dawn Falmouth way wi' father. Then I used to hear the old wagon go 'tum to tum' alawng the road, and the warses they came and kept time. Lord! to think o' the thousands of bootiful pomes I ha' made: they'd make a wallum; and I've got 'em all here in my head, thick as bees in a beehive, all a-buzzing together, one atop a' t'other."

"Do you live at St. Gurlott's, Mr. Rudd?"

"Iss, young master; I drives this here van three times a week to Falmouth and back."

"Then perhaps I'll be able to take down some of your poems for you. I am going to live there, too, you know!"

This idea pleased the drowsy giant immensely. He was about to expatiate upon it, when a heavy rain-drop falling on his hand brought him back from the clouds.

"Lawd love the lad!" he exclaimed, "how we be a-loitering. Here, jump up, young master, we'm got a good twelve mile afore us yet, and a black night prawmising to come."

I took the hand which he extended to me, and which looked like a giant's paw, and sprung up to my seat beside him.

"Hurry up, Martha," he said, "get on, old garl," and the mare's slow walk broke into a trot, which caused the wagon to rattle and shake, and my teeth to clatter in my head.

The prospect still continued bleak, but it was now not quite so desolate. To the right and left of us still stretched the bleak moorland, but now it was broken up by green hillocks and belts of woodland. Here and there on the meadows were cattle grazing, while at intervals were whitewashed cottages with little gardens running down to the roadside. From time to time we rounded some quiet bay, and caught a glimpse of the sea. Presently, far ahead of us, I saw clustering houses, from the midst of which arose a church spire.

"What is that?" I asked.

He seemed to know by instinct what I meant, for he replied without taking his eyes off the horse.

"That, young master, be Craigruddock. We'll stawp there for a bit of summat to eat and drink, and to gie the mare a rest."

When we entered the village of Craigruddock our appearance caused no little stir. John Rudd was evidently well known—for as the lumbering wagon went rattling down the little street, shock-headed children came peeping out of the door-ways, and here and there a peasant woman made her appearance, and nodded cheerfully to us as we went by. For each and all John Rudd had a good-humored grin, which I thought broadened a little as the wagon was pulled up with a jerk before the door of the inn. Here, after some little trouble we got something to eat, a few boiled eggs, and some home-baked bread. When the horse had been rested, we started again on our journey.

The warm day was succeeded by a cold evening, and with the darkness had come rain. I was glad to follow John Rudd's example, to wrap myself well up in my overcoat, before I again took my seat behind the mare. We jolted on again, covering what seemed to me an interminable space. The darkness rapidly increased, the rain continued to fall, and worn out with fatigue, I fell into a fitful doze.

I was dimly conscious of the wagon rolling on, of John Rudd making occasional disjointed remarks, rhythmical in character, to which he evidently expected no reply, and on certain stoppages, when John mysteriously disappeared, and returned refreshed and strengthened for his work

At length, however, John Rudd's voice aroused me indeed.

"Wawk up, young master," said he; "we 'm gettin' pratty nigh your place."

I roused myself and looked about me, but there was nothing to be seen. Darkness encompassed us on every hand; the wind was sighing softly, making a sound like the distant murmur of the sea.

Presently the wagon stopped. The carrier jumped down, and waited for me to do the same; then he gave a peculiar whistle as he went round to the back of the wagon to haul out my trunk.

The whistle had its effect. The darkness was suddenly penetrated by a light, which seemed quite close to us, and a man's voice called out in a broad country dialect,

"Be that *you*, John Rudd?"

"Iss, mate," returned Rudd. "You katch hold o' the young gentleman. I ha' gawt the bawx."

"Be this the lad?" asked the voice, as I felt a heavy hand laid upon my shoulder.

"Iss."

"Waal, my lad, you be welcome to St. Gurlott's!"

The hand kept hold of my shoulder and led me along. The next thing I became conscious of I was standing upon the threshold of an open door, and of the voice of my guide, saying, heartily,

"Yar he be, Martha!"

Then another voice, that of a woman, answered,

"Lawd love the lad; let's look at 'un!" and then there was silence.

I found myself standing in the middle of a quaint Cornish kitchen, gazing upon my newly found friends. The individual who had led me into the kitchen, and who turned out to be my uncle, was a tall broadly built man, dressed in a red-stained suit of coarse flannel, said suit consisting merely of a shirt and a pair of trousers. His hands were big and broad and very red, his head was thickly covered with coarse black hair, and he spoke the broadest of Cornish dialect in a voice of thunder. Having finished my inspection of number one, I glanced at number two—namely, my aunt. She was a comely-looking woman of forty, very stout and motherly in appearance. She wore a cotton dress, a large coarse apron, and a curious cap, not unlike the *coifs* so popular in Brittany.

My amazement at the sight of these two individuals was so strong that I could scarcely force my lips to utter a word; but if my surprise was great, theirs seemed greater. After the first glance at me, they looked uneasily at one another, the genial smiles faded from their faces, and the words of welcome died upon their lips.

A pleasant interruption to all this was John Rudd, who at this moment came in with my trunk upon his shoulder and placed it down on the kitchen floor, then wiped his brow and opened his overcoat.

"It's martal bad weather you'm brought alang wi' ye, Mr. Rudd," said my aunt; "yar, ha' summat to keep off the rain."

She handed him a glass of ale, which he drank.

"Thank ye, missus," said he, drawing the back of his hand across his mouth. Then he made a dive into the voluminous folds of his coat and produced a packet.

"That be for you, missus," said he; "a little present, wi' John Rudd's respects; tea and sugaar, wi' a suitable inscription o' my own making."

"Thank you, Mr. Rudd," returned my aunt, taking the packet. "You'm vary kind."

"Read the warses, missus; read the warses!" said Mr. Rudd, whereupon she proceeded to do so.

It was a proud moment for John Rudd; he seemed to expand with pleasure. And though to all intents and purposes he was gazing upon Mrs. Pendragon, he rolled one eye round my way, as if to watch the effect upon me. When the reading was done he smiled affably, while my uncle brought down his open hand heavily upon his knee.

"Waal done, John, waal done!" cried my uncle, heartily; while another voice, one which I then heard for the first time, said,

"Oh, Mr. Rudd, what beautiful poetry you do write!"

At the sound of the voice all eyes, mine amongst the rest, were turned upon the speaker, whom I discovered to be a little girl somewhat about my own age, or perhaps a trifle younger, so pretty, and so quaintly dressed, she looked like a little Dresden china shepherdess.

"Wha, Annie!" said my aunt.

"I declare I'd forgot all about 'ee!" my uncle added. "Come yar, my lass, and say how do ye do to yer cousin!"

At this the little girl came forward, and, gazing earnestly at me, timidly offered me her hard.

Suddenly, John Rudd, who had been fumbling about his coat again, produced another packet, which he this time handed to my cousin. She opened it, and found it contained a brightly colored shawl and a sheet of foolscap, on which some lines were penned. Knowing Mr. Rudd's weakness, Annie proceeded to read the lines:

> "To Annie Pendragon, who charms all beholders,
> John Rudd, of St. Gurlott's, sends this for her shoulders;
> That she'll always be happy, in sunshine and in flood,
> 'Tis the wish of her friend and admirer, J. Rudd."

Having read the verses, Annie fell to volubly admiring them and the shawl; but Mr. Rudd, feeling the praise too much for him, gleefully took his departure. He paused at the door, however, to give me a last look, and to express a wish that we should become better acquainted.

The moment he was gone, attention was again concentrated upon me. My aunt took a good look at me, trying to find traces of my mother and father in my face. My uncle discovered I was both wet and cold; while Annie said,

"Why don't you give him his supper, mother; I'm sure he must be hungry after that long ride wi' Mr. Rudd."

Annie's suggestion was adopted, and we all sat down to supper. While I ate, I had leisure to look about me. The kitchen was large and homely in the extreme, with a clean stone-paved floor beneath and great black rafters above, from which hung flitches of bacon, bundles of tallow candles, and divers articles of attire. The ingle was great and broad, with seats within it, formed of polished black oak, and the fire burned on the open hearth. In one corner was a recess, with curtains, containing a bed, which I afterward discovered was to be mine for the night.

Very little was said or done that evening. If I was astonished at the sight of my relatives, they were equally so at the sight of me. A sort of constraint came upon us all. I was not sorry to find that they were very early people, and that at ten o'clock they retired, and left me to make myself as comfortable as I could in the press-bed in the kitchen. My head was aching, partly from fatigue and partly from excitement, and no sooner did I lay it upon the pillow than I fell into a sound sleep.

CHAPTER V.

ANNIE.

I WAS awakened next morning to the sound of voices in the chamber, and, looking forth from my sleeping-place, I saw my uncle, seated in his stained flannel clothes, devouring a substantial breakfast of tea and home-baked cakes of my aunt's making, waited on by little Annie, who, seen in the bright morning light, looked even cleaner and neater than she had looked the night before.

"Lawd love 'ee, little woman," my uncle was saying, "who put that sort o' nawnsense into your head! I warrant Tawm Penruddock, or some other gomeril, ha' been up here clacking to mother. Dawn't go dawn the mine naw more? Why, the mine's bread and butter, vittles and drink, to you and me!"

"Tom Penruddock says 'taint safe, father," returned Annie; "and Tom ought to know, for he's worked there ever since he was born."

"He knaws no more than this chunk o' bread, little woman. He's the idlest chap o' the gang, Tawm is. There, dawn't you worrit. The Lawd's under the earth as well as above it, and'll take care of father, never fear."

Unseen in my corner, I slipped on my clothes; but, by the time I had done so, my uncle had left the cottage. Annie was still there, and she took me to a little bedroom upstairs, where I washed, and brushed my hair. Descending again to the quaint old kitchen, I found my aunt, just come in from feeding the poultry. She gave me a kindly nod; then, sitting down at the table, drew me gently to her, and, pushing the hair off my forehead, looked thoughtfully into my face.

"Let me look at 'ee by daylight, lad! Ay, I was right—you be as like your poor father as one pea is like another. Lawd forbid you should e'er be half as clever!"

"Why not, mother?" asked Annie, who was looking on with a smile.

"Because he were too clever to sattle down. He rambled up and dawn like a moor pony, till the Lawd took 'un, and ne'er made himself a home; and when he died, there was none of his kith and kin near him to close his eyes. Thar, lad, sit dawn and take your breakfast. We'll try to mak a man of 'ee, for my poor sister's sake."

This sudden allusion to my dead parents, coupled with the strangeness of my surroundings, brought before me more forcibly than ever the utter forlornness of my position; and sent the tears starting to my eyes. I fancy Annie noticed this, for she quickly changed the subject, asked her mother for some more hot scones, and put a chair for me at the table.

This diversion gave me ample time to recover myself. Feeling heartily ashamed of my exhibition of weakness, I swallowed the lump in my throat, dashed the back of my hand across my eyes, and determined from that hour forth to remember that tears did not become "a man."

The breakfast was appetizing—perhaps from the very strangeness of it. Never before in my life had I had placed before me, at eight o'clock in the morning, a meal of hot scones, boiled potatoes, and milk; yet I mightily pleased my aunt by disposing of enough to keep me going for the rest of the day.

"Ah, lad!" she exclaimed, as her bright eyes kindled with pleasure, "you's gawt some Cornish blood in 'ee, after all, and can eat your vittles with a relish. You'm got no proud stomach, my lad, and will be a man like your uncle before lawng."

The breakfast being over, my aunt and Annie busied themselves with "setting things to rights;" and, feeling somewhat in the way, I took my cap and strolled out, to find out if I could what sort of a country I had been landed in.

The kitchen door opened directly into the "back yard," as they called it, and here I found the poultry leisurely picking up the grain which my aunt had given them before breakfast. Here I found, too, a mongrel puppy, a sort of cross between a collie and a greyhound, it seemed to me, which, the moment I made my appearance, came wriggling, serpent-fashion, about my feet.

I passed through the yard, round to the front of the house, the puppy following close at my heels. The front of the cottage was very trim and neat; and there was a very small garden here, which was tolerably well cultivated: I afterward learned it belonged to Annie, and owed its pretty appearance entirely to her hands. It was a curious illustration of the mingling in her of the useful and ornamental. She was passionately fond of flowers, and two thirds of her little garden was devoted to them, while in the other thirp were beds of mustard and cress, radishes, and celery, with which she regularly supplied "relishes" for the table.

Having made a rapid survey of the little garden, I turned my eyes on the prospect before and beside me. The cottage, which stood alone on a slight eminence, was faced immediately by the high road which swept past and curved on to the village, which lay some quarter of a mile to the left. Immediately before me was what seemed to me a dark expanse of morass, bleak and barren enough, and dotted here and there with clumps of stunted trees. Beyond was the sea, calm, cold, and glimmering like steel.

I strolled carelessly along the road, amusing myself from time to time by throwing a stick and trying to teach the puppy to retrieve. A couple of hundred yards from the cottage I came to an iron gate, surrounded by a plantation of fir-trees, and with a long avenue leading I knew not whither. Here I paused, and, without thinking, threw the stick as far as I could up the avenue. But the puppy crouched at my feet, and declined to stir. So I opened the gate and went in.

I had not got many yards when a sharp voice arrested me.

"Here, I say, *you!*" it cried. "What are you doing here?"

I looked up and saw a boy of about my own age, dressed like a young gentleman. He had black hair, black eyebrows that came close together, and a hanging lip. I saw at once, by his dress and manner, that he was no miner's son.

"Look here, you're trespassing, you know," he continued; then suddenly, "Why, you don't belong to St. Gurlott's. What's your name?"

I told my name, and added that I was stranger, having come to

the village only last night to live with my Uncle and Aunt Pendragon. In a moment his face changed; a contemptuous sneer curled his lip as he said,

"Old Pendragon's boy, eh?" Then, "What do you mean by wearing those clothes? I thought you were a gentleman!"

His tone, more than his words, roused all the latent pride of my nature. Flushing to the temples, I turned on him.

"I am as much a gentleman as you," I said.

"What!"

"Oh, I'm not afraid of you! Do you know what they'd do with you where I come from? They'd thrash you, and send you to bed, to learn better manners."

He clinched his fist, and advanced threateningly toward me. Then, looking at me from head to foot, and finding that at all events I was his superior in point of physical strength, he changed his mind. I whistled up the puppy, and walked away.

When I reached the cottage again, I came face to face with Annie.

"Where have been?" she asked.

I told her I had been rambling idly about. She nodded brightly.

"I've got work to do to-day," she said; "leastways not much. If you like, I'll ask mother to let me come out and go for a walk."

"Do," I said; and off she flew.

She was a long time gone—so long that I began to fear the permission had been denied. She came at length, however, when I saw the cause of her delay. Her print frock had been exchanged for a stout gown. She wore a pair of silk gloves, and a hat which was evidently intended for Sundays only. As my eye wandered over these things, she blushed and tried to appear unconscious.

"Which way shall we go?" she said.

I was so perfectly unacquainted with the district that the question seemed to me absurd. I left the choice to her.

"Which way do you like best?" I said.

She pointed with her hand.

"I like to go *there*," she said, "to walk on the shore."

"On the shore?"

"Yes; don't you see that glittering over there? That's the sea, though it looks like a bit of the common now it's so still. I like to go there and walk on the shore, and see the ships pass along, and listen to the washing of the waves on the stones."

We accordingly started off across the moorland toward the sea, and after a mile's walk reached the cliffs.

Wild and desolate, they overhung the ocean, which was at high tide. A narrow path through the rocks led down to the water's edge. Descending it, with the sea-gulls hovering over us, we reached the shore, and found there a sandy creek and a solitary wooden house. We looked up; the crags rose above our heads right up into the blue heaven. Then we turned our faces toward the sea.

"It isn't like the sea, is it?" I asked, as we stood side by side; "it looks like a big broad river."

"*Now*," she assented: "but it isn't always like this. The waves are sometimes as high as houses, and they roar like wild beasts. Then there's been ships, big ships that go to India, broken up here on the rocks, and drowned men and women have been cast ashore."

"Have you *seen* them?"

"No; I've only heard tell of them. When the winds are blowing like that, and the wrecks come, mother and me stop in the house to pray for father!"

"My uncle? Why, he's a miner."

"Yes; but he's one o' the life-boat men, too, 'cause he's so strong. Look at that wooden house; that's where they keep the life-boat."

In following the direction indicated by her pointing finger, my eye fell upon something else besides the house which contained the life-boat: a rude coble lay floating in the water a few yards from where we stood. It was attached to an iron ring driven into the rocks.

"Whose boat is that?" I asked

"Oh, that belongs to John Rudd, the carrier; him that brought you to our house."

"Why, what does he do with a boat?"

"Nothing; only he found it drifting in from the sea. Then the master took it away from him, saying it was his, and offered it for sale; as nobody wanted it, he got it back again by paying a little to the master."

"And what does he do with it now?"

"He goes out fishing sometimes, when he's got the time. Sometimes he gives us a treat. He took me out in it once."

"Did you like it?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Would you like to go again?"

"What—now?"

"Yes, now. Suppose we take the boat and pull out for a bit; it would be good fun—better than staying here."

She hesitated. There was evidently such a difference in the size of John Rudd and me.

"Do come," I urged; "the oars are here ready, and I can pull as well as John Rudd."

Still she hesitated, but yielded finally. We pushed out the boat together, and I pulled away out on to the dead calm sea. How pleasant it was there, with the sun pouring its golden beams upon us, and the water smiling around and gently lapping the boat's sides! Annie took off her gloves, and trailed her fingers in the water; then she leaned over and looked down into the emerald depths below, while my eyes again swept the prospect inland.

Everything was distinguishable from the sea, the low-lying flats stretching black and desolate beneath the warm summer sky—the village, which, from my present point of vantage, seemed but a handful of houses, thrown in a hollow, just beyond the cottage where destiny had placed me. I also perceived now that there were numerous other cottages scattered about the morass, and finally, that there was one large turreted mansion rising up from a belt of greenwood.

"What house is that?" I asked.

"That? Oh, that is the master's house."

"The master?"

"Yes: Mr. Redruth, the master of the mine. Besides that," she added, "he's the master o' the whole place."

"Does he live there?"

"Yes; a good part of the year."

"Anybody else?"

"The mistress."

"That's all?"

"Yes; except at holiday times, when the young master comes home from school. He's home *now*."

Having a suspicion in my mind, I asked her what the young master was like, and she gave me an accurate description of the boy I had encountered a few hours before. I said nothing just then of my adventure; and, after this, we fell to dreaming again. Annie looked down into the sea, while I watched the shore, past which we were lazily drifting. Suddenly my eye was attracted to a huge black mass, which rose like an ominous shadow between me and the horizon. I asked Annie what it was; and she replied,

"The mine!"

To her the word had a world of meaning, to me it had none. It

simply awakened in me a keen desire for knowledge, which I immediately wanted to gratify.

"The mine!" I said. "I never thought about the mine before, or we might have gone to see it. We'll pull in and go now; shall we?"

To my amazement, she half rose from her seat, and put out her hands, as if to stop me.

"No, no!" she cried, "we won't go there—not to the mine!"

Her face was white, and she was trembling, though she was wrapped in the sun's rays as in a warm mantle of gold.

"What's the matter, Annie?" I asked. "Are you afraid?"

"Yes," she said, "I am afraid of it, because I know it is cruel, It is like a great black mouth; it seems to ask you to come down. and then it crushes you and you die. I have seen strong men like my father go down into it happy and laughing, and then afterward I have seen them brought up dead, all so black and changed and dreadful. Oh, don't talk about it; I can't bear it!"

She shivered again, and covered her eyes with her trembling hand, as if to shut out the sight.

During this conversation, I had been pulling steadily onward, so that the boat was now opposite the cliff surmounted by the mine. I turned the boat's bow shoreward; then, after a stroke or two, I rested on my oars and looked up.

We were now right below the cliff, and the view from our point of vantage was strange indeed.

On the very summit of the crags I saw the mining apparatus overhanging the sea. First, a chimney, smoking loftily at the top; then another, smoking less loftily half-way down; then, lower down, almost close to the sea in fact, a third smoking chimney, connected with what appeared to me to be a small mining office. On one side of the cliff, tall ladders were placed, to enable the miners to ascend from, and descend to, the shore; and he must have a sure foot and a strong head who could comfortably tread those ladders, round by round, the sea roaring under him and almost flinging its spray after him as he went higher and higher. Taking in the whole external apparatus in one view, chains and pulleys, chimneys and cottages, posts and winding machines, seemed to be scattered over the whole face of the cliff, like the spreading lines of an immense spider's web, while in some parts mules and their riders were trotting up and down a rocky track where the pedestrian visitor would scarcely have dared to tread.

I turned giddy, even at sight of it. I rubbed my eyes and looked again at my cousin.

Her trembling agitation had passed off, and she was looking at me.

"It was silly of me to talk like that," she said; "but I can't help it. Sometimes, when I think o' them poor men that have been brought up, and remember that father is there, it a'most makes me scream!"

"But there's no danger," I said, "*now!*"

"There's always danger!" she returned. "Tom Penruddock said so, and I told father, but he only laughed. Ah, but I've seen others laugh too—them as is lying now in the church-yard!"

This conversation, sad as it was, had its fascination for me. It made me want to know more about the mystery of the mine. What I saw, indeed, was not the mine itself, but only its outer machinery. The main shaft, Annie told me, opened down into the solid earth, from the body of the cliff, and was covered by a trap-door, from which dizzy ladders led down into the subterranean darkness.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE MINE.—UNDER THE SEA.

It must not be supposed that my uncle and aunt, although they had adopted me, could afford to allow me to eat for very long the bread of idleness. Had it been necessary, they would willingly have shared with me their slender means; but it was not necessary. I was fourteen years of age, I had received a good education, and I was in every way fitted to earn my bread. But what could I do? My inclination was for the sea. I longed to become a sailor; not because I had any particular love for ships, but because I had some wild idea that it might ultimately be the means of bringing me to Madeline. Besides, I must own that I was not exactly proud of my newly found relations and a home which was so different to Munster's. Sometimes at night when I sat furtively watching my uncle smoking his pipe in the ingle, and my aunt darning the stockings, I fell to wondering what the boys would say if they saw them, and my cheeks burned with shame. It was on one of these evenings that I ventured to express my wish to go to sea. My aunt threw up her hands in horror.

"Lawd love the lad!" she cried; "if he be'ant like his father

a'ready! You'd like to gaw to say, would ye? to wander over the face of the earth and die, like your father did, without a roof to cawver your head? A sailor! Lawd love 'ee, and why would you be a sailor?"

I stammered something about wishing to work for my living, when my uncle cut my explanation short by patting me on the head and saying,

"You'm a good lad, I'm glad to hear 'ee talk saw; but there's no cause for 'ee to gaw to say. You'm a-comin' to wark wi' me, Hugh!"

"In the mine!" I exclaimed in delight, for my strong desire to go down the shaft was growing; but my uncle shook his head.

"Naw, naw, lad; the mine be only for big coarse men like me: a slip of a lad like you will be better whar you'm gawing—inta the awfice."

"The office!" I repeated, my ardor being considerably damped.

"Have 'ee fixed it all, Tawm?" asked my aunt.

"Iss, mother, I fixed it wi' the master this fawrenoon. Hugh can gaw on Monday and begin."

Thus it will be seen that my destiny was mapped out for me. On the Monday I began my duties as under-clerk, with but little satisfaction to myself beyond the fact that I contributed six shillings a week toward the household expenditure. Thus my new life began, a life which promised to be uneventful enough. At first I chafed somewhat: but Time, that healer of all things, brought solace to me. As months rolled on, the memory of Munster's began to grow dim; and when I thought of Madeline it was of some lovely vision seen in a dream.

Monotonous as my days promised to be, I soon managed to infuse a little pleasure into them, principally with the aid of my friend and ally, honest John Rudd; for we soon became close chums. He conceived a great respect for me, partly on account of my superior education, and partly because I rendered him such valuable assistance in the transcription of his poems. He placed his boat entirely at my disposal, also lent me his gun, a rusty old Joe Manton, which I kept in secret, and with which I used to amuse myself in the evenings when my work was done.

But the one great fascination for me was the mine. It was becoming a sort of "Frankenstein," haunting me by night and by day; I saw it before me as I sat writing in the office, and when I was asleep at night I saw it in my dreams, opening its huge black jaws and preparing to crush away some hapless life. The more I

heard of it, the stronger grew my wish to explore for myself those dark bowels of the earth.

Again and again I had begged my uncle to take me down, but he refused. At last, however, one Sunday morning, he came to me and to my intense delight said,

"You can gaw dawn the mine t'-day, Hugh. I be gawn' dawn. I'll tak' 'ee wi' me."

Excitement is welcome to all boys, and it was especially welcome to me; but there was one cloud on my sunshine, when I looked up and saw that my cousin Annie was as white as a sheet and trembling violently.

"Don't, father, don't!" she said, piteously.

My father laughed.

"Lor a mussey, Annie, what a frawhtened little woman you'm gettin'!" he said. "Wha, you arn't like a miner's lass, Annie. We must mak' the lad a man, nawt a milksop. Naw then, Hugh, hurry up and get ready, we'm nawt got much time to lose!"

The first thing to be done was to attire myself in one of my uncle's mining suits of flannel, and possess myself of one of his broad felt hats. This was soon done. I was now a man in all but years, and I managed to cut a tolerable figure in my uncle's clothes; indeed, when I made my reappearance in the kitchen, he declared, with a nod of approval, that I looked every inch a miner. It was a proud moment for me: now, for the first time, I felt my manhood upon me, and I laughed with my uncle at Annie's pale cheeks and my aunt's sad eyes.

My uncle handed me half a dozen candles, which he told me to put into my pocket, then, with a merry nod to the womenfolk, we started.

It was no easy matter to get to the entrance of the mine, not being able to go straight to the shafts as in the case of mines on level ground. First of all we had to make our way to the counting-house, in which I sat at my daily toil. The way was long and difficult to travel, on account of the accumulation of mining gear we had to pass; long chains stretched out over bell cranks, wooden platforms looking like battered remnants of wrecks, yet supporting large beams of timber and heavy coils of rope. Here there was a little creaking shed, there a broken down post or two, and there again we had to wind round by the rocky path amidst chains and cables and ascending loads.

I, having to travel this road every day of my life, was well accustomed to it, and I accordingly followed on my uncle's footsteps

without much feeling of curiosity or joy; but when we had passed the counting house, ascended the cliff, and gained the trap-door entrance to the mine, my heart began to beat with anticipation.

Here we both paused.

"You'll keep a strawng head," said my uncle, looking at me. "'Twill be a bad business if you begin to tramble like our Annie. Are you sure you arn't afraid, lad?"

"Not a bit," I returned; then, looking at the ladder which was set at the entrance of the mine, I asked, "Shall I go first?"

"Bide a bit, bide a bit, lad!" he returned. "Gi's one o' tham candles."

I did so, whereupon he lit it and stuck it into my hat, then he lit another for himself; after this he began to descend the first ladder, and I followed him.

The first object I was conscious of was the huge beam of a steam-engine, which worked on my right, alternately bowing and rising, and heavily straining at the deluge of water which it lifted. On the other side, through boards, the chinks of which admitted just light enough at the foot of one of the ladders to show the passage, I saw the loaded tubble or bucket, rushing past its descending companion.

We were now between two shafts, descending from stage to stage; the daylight was completely gone, and we depended solely on our candles, which threw but a faint light into the gloomy abyss below.

After descending two or three ladders, which were almost perpendicular, we came to a platform, and made a halt.

"Waal, lad?" said my uncle, holding his flickering candle above his head, and looking into my face.

I laughed, and hastened to assure him it was all right, though, in reality, I began to feel some of my cousin's misgiving. We rested a second or two, the halt indeed being made more for me than for my guide; then my uncle took another lighted candle, and stuck it into my hat.

"Naw, lad," said he, "come on wi' a will; lay hawld o' the sides o' the ladder, and ha' a care."

I promised to obey him, and we recommenced our descent, he going first and I following. We went down first one ladder and then another, till again we came to a platform and rested.

"What's below?" I asked of my uncle, who was again regarding me curiously, trying to detect if possible any sign of fear or shrinking in my face.

"What's belaw, lad?" he said. "Wha, the water drained from

all the mine, the pumps at wark pumping it awt, and p'raps a cart-load o' ratting human bawns."

We descended a couple more ladders and landed again, this time to traverse one of those side galleries in which the pit abounded. It was about seven feet high, but so narrow that two persons, if thin, could just squeeze past one another. The only light now was that afforded by our candles, which flickered in the hot, sick, damp vapor which floated about us.

The fetid air of the place was beginning to tell upon me, my breath became labored, the perspiration streamed down my face, while mud and tallow and iron drippings were visible on my clothes. My uncle, who was similarly bespattered to myself, but who was breathing more freely, recommended a rest. I sat down on the floor while he set himself to replenish the candles, which had nearly flickered out.

Sitting thus in the stillness, I became conscious of a strange moaning and soughing sound. After listening intently, I asked my uncle what it was.

"It's the Sae," he returned; "it be rolling up thar above our heads."

CHAPTER VII.

A VISIT OF INSPECTION.

THUS began my knowledge of the mine; from that day forth my interest in it deepened, and it haunted me like a passion. Its darkness and perils had a fascination for me, and I was not content till I had explored every cranny and familiarized myself with the mining art or science. Eager for information, I read every book on the subject that I could borrow, and in a short time I could have passed a pretty stiff examination as an engineer.

I must now pass over, at one swift bound, a lapse of eight years. During that time, I had exchanged the duties of clerk for that of assistant overseer, and then, on the death of Mr. Redruth, for those of overseer-in-chief.

Behold me, then, at twenty-two years of age, the mainstay of the Pendragon household; changed somewhat, for—

> "Nature doth subdue itself
> To what it works on, like the dyer's hand;"

rough, robust, full of strength, and its rude pride. In my twenty-second year occurred an event which was destined to exercise no

little influence over my whole future life. As I approach the chronicling of this event, my heart beats and my hand trembles, and the fitful passion of those far-off days awakens troublously again.

I was standing one day on the cliffs, close to the mouth of the mine, when I saw two figures coming from the direction of the village. One was my cousin Annie, now a comely young woman, the other was young George Redruth, whom I had scarcely set eyes upon since the time of his father's death.

They were talking earnestly, and did not seem at first to notice me; but presently I saw Annie give a startled look in my direction, and afterward they approached together. Now, I don't know how it happened—it was instinct, I suppose, or something of that sort—but never, from the moment of our first meeting as boys, had I been able to regard George Redruth with any feeling but one of excessive irritation and dislike. His flippant, patronizing manner had something to do with it; so, perhaps, had his good looks, for his worst enemy could not have denied that he was superbly handsome. As I glanced at his pale, beautifully formed face, at his slight graceful figure, at his elegant dress, I was painfully conscious of my own physical inferiority. Though I was strongly built and not ill-favored, wind and weather had worked their will on me, and I was rough, I knew, as my daily occupation.

He strolled up carelessly, swinging his cane, and smoking a cigar.

"Ah, Trelawney," he said, with a nod; "your cousin Annie has been telling me that there are complaints, again, about the outlying shafts of the mine. So I'm going down to have a look round."

"Very well, sir," I replied, wondering in my own mind why Annie had chosen to make herself the mouth-piece of the men.

"I suppose it's safe enough?" he said, after a moment. "You know, though I am a mine-owner, I don't know much about the business; I used to leave all that to the governor."

"It is only right," was my reply, "that you should judge its safety for yourself. If anything happened, you would be responsible."

"I don't know about that," he said, sharply; "I pay you for superintending the work, and if there's danger—"

"There *is*!" I interposed.

"Well, then, I pay *you* for facing it and reporting upon it. One can't be both employer and servant too!"

I was about to retort somewhat angrily, for the manner of his

speech was even more insufferable than its matter, when I met Annie's entreating eyes, and refrained.

"Mr. George," she said, quickly, "is anxious that nothing should go wrong."

"Of course I am," cried the young man, with a curious laugh. "I know what flooding the mine means—any amount of expense, perhaps ruin; for if the sea once got fairly in—whew! it would be a bad job for me."

"And for the men," I said, frowning.

"And for the men, of course; but it's their living, and no doubt they know how to look after themselves. Be good enough to make all ready, Trelawney, for I'm going down at once. I suppose there is a dress handy?"

I answered in the affirmative, and walked off toward the office. Looking back over my shoulder, I saw him glance after me, and then, with a contemptuous laugh, say something to Annie. My blood boiled angrily, and my cheeks grew crimson. I could have turned back and struck him in the face.

Close to the office, I found my uncle, who had just come up from underground, and who was covered with the rust of the copperas earth. I told him the young master was going down, and he was delighted.

"He's a brave lad, Master Jarge," he cried, "a fine brave lad! I'll gaw wi' 'un, and shaw 'un where the wall be breaking down."

Presently, Redruth came along, and followed me into the office, where several woolen costumes were hanging. He laughed [illegible] as he transformed himself into a miner. When the transform[illegible] was complete, he still looked the gentleman; and, in spite of [illegible]self, I still felt the irritating sense of my own inferiority.

My uncle led the way down the trap, showing infinite care and tenderness for the young master, who followed him, while I came last. The earth soon swallowed us, and the only light we had was the light of the candles stuck upon our persons and in our hats.

From ladder to ladder we went, till we reached the central platform, where we paused to take breath. Then down we crept again, till we reached the lowest galleries, and became conscious of the gnome-like figures at work in the submarine darkness. My uncle still led the way, stopping from time to time to pilot Redruth over awkward stones and dangerous trap-holes. Our progress was now very slow. Walking, stooping, crawling, climbing, descending, we proceeded; now crossing black abysses, thinly covered with quaking planks; past wild figures kneeling or lying, and laboring with

short pick-axes at the ore; and as we went, the roar which had been in our ears from the beginning deepened, while the solid rocks above us seemed quaking in the act to fall.

At last my uncle paused and wiped his brow. We were all three now completely disfigured—with earth, mud, tallow, rust, and iron drippings.

"Where the deuce are we now?" asked the young master.

"Whar, Master Jarge?" repeated my uncle, with a friendly grin. "Right dawn under the Sae."

Redruth glanced at me.

"How far down, Trelawney?"

"Twenty fathoms under the sea level, sir, and three hundred feet, or more, out beyond low water mark."

"Well, where's the damage? It all seems snug enough."

He was certainly very cool, though he had not been underground more than once or twice in his life; and I wondered to myself whether his *insouciance* came from bravado or sheer stupidity.

"Come this way, Master Jarge!" said my uncle, crawling forward, until we reached a narrow space with just room for two of us to stand abreast. Suddenly, we found ourselves ankle deep in water, and at the same time thick drops like heavy rain fell from the rocks above us.

My uncle reached up with his hands, and touched the roof, which was partially fortified with wood and cement.

"Ah, I plugg'd this yar last night, Master Jarge," he explained; been te[illegible]alt water were streaming in like a fall."

sha[illegible]s he spoke, the roar deepened to a crash, and we could distinctly hear the sea grinding on the pebbles, right above our heads. It seemed momently as if the whole fabric of the rock would break in, under the flux and reflux of the rolling waves.

I saw Redruth start back, and glance toward the gallery down which we had come. But he recovered his *sang-froid* in a moment.

"The deuce!" he muttered. "How thick is the ceiling here, Trelawney?"

"Six feet at the thickest, sir; at the thinnest, where you see the wooden plug, not more than three."

Young Redruth looked up again, and taking a candle from his person, examined the rock. It was actually percolated with sea-water oozing through the solid granitic mass, and covered with green and glistening ooze; but through all the dampness and

sliminess the stripes of pure copper ran in rich bars, forming part of the finest and most precious lode in the whole mine.

"Why, it's almost solid ore," he said.

"Iss, Master Jarge," returned my uncle, "but us can't go no further this ways without flooding the shaft. It would be warth thousands o' pounds to gaw on, and 'twill cost a heap to keep tight and safe as it be."

"Is that so, Trelawney?"

"Yes, sir. We must build up this part of the gallery and have it closed. I can't keep the men from using their picks where the ore runs thickest, even when every inch of stuff they loosen is bringing them nearer to their death."

The young master made no further remark just then, but continued his examination of the other parts of the mine. In several other places the roof was dangerous. My uncle pointed out the various unsafe portions, and led the way from gallery to gallery, until the tour of inspection was complete.

At last we reascended to the sunshine. How bright and dazzling all seemed after that subaqueous darkness! Redruth seemed in a brown study. Not until he had washed himself and reassumed his ordinary attire, did he find his tongue. By this time, my uncle had returned to his labors down below, and we two were left alone.

"Is there anything else you wish to report?" asked Redruth, sharply, as we stood together at the office door.

"Nothing more than I have already reported in writing."

"Well, what was that?"

"The whole mine wants repair. Putting aside the outlying galleries, where the sea may enter at any minute, the engines and machinery need replacing, the ladders are rotten; in fact, everything is in the last stage of decay; and no wonder, seeing that scarcely a penny has been spent on it within my memory."

He frowned, and bit his lips; then he looked me contemptuously from head to foot.

"You are a pretty fellow, a very pretty fellow. You want to ruin me, eh?"

"No, sir; but I want to insure the safety of the men."

"Pshaw! You are a croaker, and know little or nothing of the matter," he said, turning on his heel.

"At any rate, sir," I returned, following him, "you will have the outer galleries filled up, at once? If you don't, I'll not answer for the consequences."

"Who the devil asked you?" he cried. "Your place is to re-

port, not to advise. As to ceasing to work the outer galleries, I suppose you know that the richest lode of ore runs there, and that the inner portion of the mine is almost barren?"

"I know that; but—"

"But you prefer mutiny and disaffection to study of your employer's interests? I tell you flatly, I don't intend to listen to such nonsense. Thanks to you, the mine at present yields little or no profit, and I am in a fair way to become a beggar."

He saw me smile incredulously, as I cried: "Then you will do nothing?"

"I will do nothing under your advice, for I don't trust you. A gentleman in whom I have the utmost confidence will be here to-morrow morning. You will accompany him down the mine, and you will show him what you have shown me. I shall then be guided by his advice, not by yours."

With these words he walked away.

Soon after sunrise the next morning, as I sat in the office at the mine-head, I was visited by the person to whom young Redruth had alluded. He was a thin, spare, sandy-haired young man of about thirty, with a mean type of countenance, and an accent which was a curious compound of Cockneyisms and Americanisms. He had indeed, been born within the sound of Bow-Bells; but having spent a portion of his manhood in the United States, he affected the free and easy manners of a Yankee citizen.

He gave me his card, on which was printed the words—

EPHRAIM S. JOHNSON,

Civil Engineer,

Bethesda,

State of New York.

I glanced at the name, and then took a good look at the owner. He wore a showy tweed suit, a glaring red necktie with a horse-shoe pin, and a light billycock hat. Altogether, his appearance was not prepossessing.

He informed me, in a high shrill voice, that he had been instructed by Mr. George Redruth to go down the mine, and report on its prospects and condition.

"You'll find its condition bad enough," I said quickly.

"Maybe I shall, and maybe I sha'n't," he answered. "I don't want to prejudice my mind, young man; not that you could do it

it you tried. Guess I haven't been three year on the Shoshone territory for nothing."

He pronounced it "nothink," but that is neither here nor there. I saw at once from his manner that he had come with a preconceived opinion, and that nothing he might see would be likely to make him side with the men against their master. However, I treated him as civilly as possible, and, when he had assumed the necessary dress, we made the tour of inspection together. When we came to the outlying gallery, above which the sea was thundering, he trembled a good deal and gave other signs of agitation, and he did not recover himself until he had regained the open air, which he did after a very perfunctory visit indeed. Once or twice on the way, as we ascended the ladders communicating with the abyss, he grew giddy, and I had to watch him carefully, fearing he might fall. All this, it may be guessed, did not increase my respect for Mr. Ephraim S. Johnson.

He did not altogether recover his equanimity until he had sloughed his miner's dress and put on his own radiant apparel. Then, curious to know what he would say to his employer, I questioned him:

"Well, Mr. Johnson? Did I exaggerate when I said that the mine was unsafe?"

He answered me sharply and impudently, but averting his small keen eyes from mine:

"Excuse me, young man, I shall report my opinion to Mr. George Redruth, not to *you*. I don't mind saying, however, that I guess you *did* exaggerate, on the whole."

Angry at his manner, I could not forbear retorting:

"You didn't seem to express that opinion when you were down below!"

"What do you mean?" he cried, turning crimson.

"I mean that you seemed rather in a hurry to get back to the *terra firma*, up here!"

He did not reply, but gave me a look full of malignity and dislike. Then he walked out of the office, but the next minute he put his head in again at the door.

"You think yourself smart," he said; "but you'll have to get up early before you're as smart as *me*. I mean to do my duty, young man, and so you'll find afore very long."

He left me with this curious valediction. I saw neither Redruth nor Johnson for some days. Then I heard casually that the latter had gone back to London. About a week after his departure, I

saw it publicly announced that arrangements had been made with George Redruth, Esq., the proprietor, to turn the St. Gurlott's copper-mine into a joint-stock company, the said George Redruth, Esq., receiving half the purchase-money and retaining the other half in fully paid-up shares. Nothing was said about the precise amount of commission money which went into the pocket of Mr. E. S. Johnson, but the name of that worthy was down on the prospectus as surveyor and inspecting engineer, and I had no doubt whatever in my own mind that he had made a very excellent bargain.

CHAPTER VIII.

I PLAY THE SPY.

A LITTLE after the establishment of the London company, Johnson came down to St. Gurlott's and took lodgings in a farm-house in the neighborhood. After what had occurred, I expected to receive my *congé* at once, but although the stranger was formally installed as resident inspector and supervisor, no attempt was made as yet to remove me from my former position. The fact was, I believe, that Johnson had too little confidence in his own practical knowledge, to say nothing of his own courage, to undertake willingly the perilous duties of overseer.

So greatly did I resent his presence, however, that I at first resolved to resign; but yielding to the entreaties of my uncle, and the prayers of Annie, I remained. I soon saw that Johnson was completely in young Redruth's confidence—was, in fact, his servant, spy, and general familiar. Under his advice, nothing whatever was done to amend the condition of affairs in the mine, the fittings and machinery of which remained as dilapidated as ever. On my own responsibility, however, I closed up the dangerous outer galleries, and forbade the men, on pain of dismissal, from working the ore in that direction. Although Johnson heard of this, and doubtless reported it to his superior, neither of them made any communication to me on the subject—just then.

I must now turn from the affairs of the mine to my own quiet life at home in my uncle's house—which will lead me, rapidly enough, back to young George Redruth.

I had noticed for several weeks that some important secret communion was going on between my uncle and aunt. What it was all about I couldn't guess, but it was evidently connected in some

way with myself. I often caught them looking at me, and, when detected, exchanging glances of infinite meaning. I was beginning to think of asking for an explanation, when accident made me acquainted with the whole mystery.

I had returned home one evening too late for the ordinary tea, and was sitting taking mine alone, waited on by Annie, as I had to return to the office again that night, and might probably have to go down the mine. I still wore my miner's dress, but my uncle had changed his, and was sitting contentedly smoking on one side of the fire, while just opposite to him was my aunt, busily darning stockings.

The meal over, I got up, lit my pipe, and wished them all good-night.

"Don't sit up for me!" I said, "I shall be late to-night."

"Where are you going to, Hugh?" asked Annie, carelessly.

"Back to the office. I've got to go down the mine again, too."

"Shall you go to the office first," she asked, "or down the mine?"

I laughed at what I then thought her unmeaning curiosity.

"Which do you think I ought to do first, Miss Curiosity?" I said.

"Go down the mine," she answered, promptly; "then you could change those things, and do your accounts comfortable like."

"Upon my word, Annie," I said, "there's a world of wisdom in that pretty little head of yours."

I put my arm round her shoulders—gave her a kiss—at which my aunt and uncle laughed delightedly.

"Good-night all!" I said again. "Annie, I shall take your advice, and go straight down the mine!" And I was off.

I had gone only a little way, when I suddenly remembered that certain account-books which I should need that night were in my room at the cottage. I hesitated a moment—then I turned back to get them. It was growing rather dark; but that was of little consequence to me, since I could have walked every step of the way blindfolded, and, for the descent into the mine, daylight was of little use.

So I strolled slowly back, enjoying my pipe and the freshness of the evening air, and when I reached the cottage it was quite dark. I paused before the kitchen window, which was open, for the night was sultry, and looked in.

My aunt and uncle still sat in much the same position they had occupied when I left them, but Annie was gone. I was about to put

my head in at the window, and acquaint them with my return, when I heard the mention of my own name.

"Yes," said my aunt, nodding her head, "I ha' watched 'em, and I know Annie favors Hugh, if ever any lass favored a lad."

"Well, I hope you'm right, Martha, old gal," my uncle returned. "He be a good lad, and I shall be glad to call him my son."

I heard no more—I felt like a man who had received a knock-down blow, and I staggered under it a bit. Annie love me?—the old people planning our marriage? It was all so new it took me a time to recover. But was it true? Were they right? Did my cousin really care for me? I glanced back on all the years we had been together, and I concluded that after all it might be possible. Certainly, Annie had given no very marked evidence of her love; but then she was not a demonstrative girl. A quiet lowering of the eyelids, a little pink blush, were more in her line.

And then of late she had sorely changed. I had noticed that, and wondered a bit; now the meaning of it seemed clear. Annie, my little cousin Annie, whom I had ever regarded as a sister and a child, had developed into a woman and was capable of feeling a woman's love.

My thoughts turned from Annie to myself: I began to analyze my own feelings, and to pronounce upon them. Did I love Annie? Yes, in one sense; no, in another. Yet my affection for her was of that strong, deep nature that I might have mistaken it for love, if that one all-absorbing episode of my school-days had never been. Even then, after a lapse of years, the thought of Madeline made my blood tingle in my veins, and my heart beat painfully. Of all this the old people knew nothing; they had evidently made up their minds that Annie and I were exactly suited to one another, and ought to be man and wife. Whether or not I was glad or sorry at this discovery I could not tell; my feelings were a strange mixture which I could not analyze.

Before I had time to think very deeply on the subject, the kitchen door opened, and Annie herself appeared on the threshold. Though it was dark out of doors, the light in the kitchen showed her to me distinctly. She wore a long black cloak, which she folded tightly around her shoulders; its hood covered her head.

"I am going down to the village. I sha'n't be long," I heard her say, in answer to her mother's question. Then she came out, closing the kitchen door after her.

She paused a moment outside; then she hurried away—I, rather

aimlessly, following her. She crossed the high road which led to the village, and took instead a narrow footpath which led by a short cut to the mine. Wondering what could be taking her that way, I continued to follow her.

She quickened her pace now, almost to a run. When she had got about half-way to the mine, she turned off again, and hastened along with increased speed toward Greystock Tower.

Greystock Tower was a ruin, consisting of three dilapidated ivy-covered walls and a buttress; it stood on an eminence a few hundred yards from the sea-shore, and by the superstitious inhabitants of the village was supposed to be haunted. Even Annie, I had suspected till that night, shared in the popular belief. I was the more astonished, therefore, to see her going toward it, alone, on a dark night, and as if her very life depended upon her speed.

Having reached the ruin, she paused, and stood as if listening. There was a dead silence all round, broken only by the washing of the sea. I crept up in the shadow of the ruin.

Presently, I heard a peculiar whistle. Annie said softly,

"Yes—I am here." Then a figure, that of a man, emerged from the darkness and joined her.

My astonishment at all this was so great that for a time I was utterly unable to move; but, from my shadowy hiding-place, I watched the pair. Who the man was, I could not tell, the darkness completely concealing his features; but I saw that he was taller than Annie, and that he was smoking a cigar.

They stood close together, talking earnestly; but I could not catch a word of what they said. Presently, they began to move away, and I deemed it time to interfere.

In two strides I was between them—Annie uttered a scream, the man an oath. But he stood his ground, and looked into my face.

It was now my turn to utter an exclamation. The man was young Redruth, the master of the mine.

The contretemps was so complete that for a moment neither of us spoke. Redruth, being the coolest, was the first to speak.

"What are you doing here, Trelawney?" he asked, curtly.

"I am here to take my cousin home, sir," I replied.

"Indeed," he sneered; "I should have thought you were here to play the spy!"

"Even that would be better than playing the villain," I returned.

Here Annie, seeing a storm brewing, interfered.

"Hugh, dear Hugh!" she said, plucking at my sleeve.

But young Redruth now stepped forward.

"Don't agitate yourself, Annie," said he, coolly, while I was ready to knock him down. "And you, sir," he added, addressing me, "stand out of the way; I have business with this young lady, and I request you to leave us."

"And if I refuse?"

He raised a small cane which he carried and struck me across the shoulders. In a moment I had wrenched it from his hand, and with one well-planted blow I would have made him measure his length upon the ground, but, with another scream, Annie rushed forward and stood between us.

"You shall pay for this, you scoundrel!" said my master; and, without another word, he disappeared into the darkness.

Annie, still frightened and trembling, rushed forward to follow him, but in a moment I was beside her.

"You'll come with me, Annie," I said, taking her hand firmly in mine.

By this time, she was crying bitterly. "Oh, Hugh," she sobbed, "what have you done! You will ruin us all—yourself, father, and all of us!"

But I took no heed of her, I kept my hold upon her, and led her back across the meadows to the cottage.

During the walk, no word passed between us. I was silent, expecting she would give some explanation of the scene I had witnessed; but as she volunteered none, I said nothing. When we reached the cottage gate, she paused, and spoke.

"Hugh," she said, "you won't tell mother or father—"

"No, no," I interrupted her. "Don't fear for me, but I mean to look after you in the future, Annie."

"Don't be hard on me, Hugh," she said, piteously. "I meant no harm. But it will be better for you and father if I speak to the young master sometimes."

"You'd best let us manage our own affairs, Annie, and keep yourself to the house; always remember that."

She dried her eyes and composed herself a bit, and we went in together.

The old couple were astonished, but not ill-pleased at seeing us in company. They noticed Annie's pallor, too, and exchanged looks, the meaning of which I now knew full well. I dreaded to be questioned; so when Annie had gone to her room, which she did pretty quickly, I explained that I had returned for certain little account-books, and having met Annie by the way, had brought her in.

Then I possessed myself of the books, and hurried back to the office to finish my night's work.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNIE'S CONFESSION.

THEY were all in bed when I got back that night; but as I passed the door of Annie's room, I fancied I heard the sound of sobbing. I knocked softly, but she made no answer; so I concluded that I must have been mistaken, and that she was asleep.

The next morning she attended at breakfast as usual. She looked a little pale, and now and again glanced uneasily and rather questioningly at me. When I rose to go, she put on her bonnet, saying,

"I am going a bit of the way with Hugh, mother;" and then, somewhat to my surprise, she came along with me into the road. When we were fairly away from the houses, and passing across the moor, she put her hand on my arm, and said softly,

"Hugh, dear Hugh, I have been out before this morning. I have seen the young master."

I suppose my face darkened ominously, for she hurriedly continued—

"Hugh, you must not get angry—indeed, you must not. I did it for the best. I was afraid, after what happened last night, that he would dismiss you; and he would have done, but I have interceded, and now all will be as it was before."

"You have interceded for *me!*" I said. "Then you were wrong, Annie; if he wishes to dismiss me, let him. I have other mean of earning my bread."

For answer to this Annie employed a stronger medium than words—she cried. Now, tears always disarm me; all I could do was what I did: soothe my cousin, kiss her pretty cheek, call myself a brute, and avow that she was the dearest, sweetest little woman in the world. Under this process, Annie came round, and smiled sadly up at me through her tears.

"You promise," she said, "to go on just the same as usual, and to take no notice of what occurred last night?"

"I will promise," I said, "if you can show me the good of it."

"The good of it will depend upon whether or not you care anything about me!" she replied. "Just think, Hugh, if you two

quarrel again, and you are dismissed, everybody will know why it all came about—and my mother and father too. Ah, Hugh, dear Hugh, for my sake!"

She folded her little hands over my arm, and looked up into my face like a supplicating child.

As I looked down into her bright eyes, now fast filling again with tears, the thought came into my mind to do what her mother and father wished me to do. "Annie," I thought of saying, "give *me* a right to protect you. Let me call you wife, and I will agree to all you say." But something held me, and the golden moment passed.

"All right, Annie," I said; "don't worry yourself, little woman. I won't do a thing that will injure *you*."

For a couple of days or so the master kept away, and things went on at the works pretty much the same as usual; but on the fourth day he strolled down. He talked a good deal to Johnson, but never addressed one word to me. He looked at me, however, and the look he gave made me wonder what strange influence Annie possessed when she could induce him to keep in his employment one whom he so cordially hated. I, however, took no notice, since I had given my promise to Annie, and an onlooker would never have guessed that anything sinister was going on.

How long this state of things might have lasted, it is impossible to say, but it was most unexpectedly and suddenly changed.

One day my aunt, having a little shopping to do, and eager perhaps for a day's outing, determined to go to Falmouth. She started off in the morning in John Rudd's wagon, and left my cousin to keep house.

Now, it had seemed to me that Annie had looked particularly dull that morning; so, toward afternoon, I determined to take an hour, and to hurry back to the cottage to see how she was getting on.

As I drew near to the cottage door, I was astonished to hear voices—the one loud and angry, the other soft and pleading. When I entered the kitchen, my amazement increased tenfold.

An elderly lady—none other, indeed, than old Mrs. Redruth, George Redruth's widowed mother—was standing in the middle of the room, while my cousin Annie, crying bitterly, was actually on her knees before her!

Mrs. Redruth had two characteristics, her confirmed ill-health and her iron will. Her power in the village was great; but she was feared, rather than beloved. Indeed, it was averred by many

that every hard deed committed by either her husband or her son might have been traced to her influence. For the rest, she was a tall thin woman, with powerful aquiline features and a face of ghastly pallor.

Amazed at her presence there, I entered unceremoniously; but both were so intent upon themselves that they were actually unaware of my approach.

The old woman was speaking.

"Your tears don't deceive me," she said. "I am not a man and a fool. I am a mother, and I know when danger threatens my child, and I say that you are doing your best to entangle my son. But take care. George Redruth shall not be sacrificed; sooner than that, I will ruin you—do you hear?—ruin *you!*"

"Oh, my lady!" sobbed Annie, "will you listen?"

"No," she returned, "I will not! Listen to *you*—when every word you utter must be a lie! I have seen you with my son. Cease to follow him, or I will expose you before every soul in the village!"

She turned to leave the cottage, and came face to face with me. She paused abruptly, opened her lips, as if about to speak; then she changed her mind, and without uttering a word passed out.

As for myself, I had been too much stupefied to say a word, and I stood now, like a great bear, looking at my cousin, who, sobbing piteously, had sunk into a chair. Then suddenly, while gazing at her thus, it seemed to me that the time had come for me to speak. I went up to her, raised her from the chair, and folded her in my arms.

"Annie," I said, "Annie, my dear, let there be an end to this. Give *me* the right to protect you from all this trouble that has come upon you lately. Become my wife."

She started, and stared at me like a frightened child.

"Your wife, Hugh?" she said. "Your wife!"

"Yes, Annie," I answered. "My wife—that is, if you care for me enough, my dear!"

At this, she fell to crying afresh, and clung to me tenderly.

"Ah, Hugh, dear Hugh!" she sobbed. "You are the kindest and best man in all the world, and it is your kindness which makes you ask me this now, for you don't *love* me, Hugh."

Her words cut me to the heart, for I felt their truth.

"Perhaps," I said, "I don't romance as some young fellows might, but I shall make as good a husband. I have always been fond of you, Annie, ever since that night, years ago, when I first came here and you gave me a welcome. We have ever been excel-

lent friends, haven't we?—and now tell me if we shall be more than friends?"

She shook her head.

"No, Hugh; be what you have always been—my own dear brother."

"Is it because you think I don't care for you, Annie?"

"Ah, no!" she replied. "Don't think it is that. So much the better for you, dear, that you don't love me; for even if it were otherwise, we two could never be man and wife."

I looked into her eyes, and I thought I read their meaning. Annie did not care for me; her heart was with another man, and that man far above her.

I think I see those who read these lines smiling at my ignorance or my folly, and asking, was it possible that all I had seen or heard awakened in my mind no suspicion of any darker wrong lurking in my little cousin's path? Yes; it was quite possible. Grown man as I was, I had no experience whatever of the world. I would have trusted Annie in any company, or in any place, and I never dreamed for a moment that there could be any danger to one so good.

As my thought travels back to that time, I reproach myself again and again for my own blindness. What worlds of sorrow it would have saved if I had been less unsuspicious—if I had only loved poor Annie more!

CHAPTER X.

THE LETTER.

But after this I watched Annie a good deal, and I soon discovered she had a great and growing trouble on her mind. She was restless and ill at ease, and once or twice, while I observed her quietly, I saw tears suddenly start to her eyes.

Her mother and father noticed this, too; but they attributed the change to quite another cause. They were good, honest folk, who could only consider one project at a time; and as for several months past their minds had been occupied solely with the idea of a marriage between Annie and myself, they naturally assumed disagreements between us two to be the cause their daughter's depression. I had not the heart to undeceive them. I determined, however, to speak to Annie again, and ask for some further explanation of this mystery.

One afternoon, about three days after our former interview, I was standing at the mouth of the mine, thinking things, when I was startled by the sudden appearance of my aunt. She looked pale; rather alarmed; but ready to become very angry.

"Hugh!" she said, before I had time to open my lips, "where be Awnie?"

Had I been able at that moment to produce my cousin, she would certainly have been rated very soundly; whereas, I shook my head and said, "I don't know!" the rising anger entirely disappeared, and her face grew paler.

"But you'm seen her to-day?" she continued.

"No. When I left this morning you were all abed."

At this my aunt fairly broke down, and moaned between her sobs, "Oh, Hugh! she's gone, gone!"

I was fairly stunned, and all I could do just then was to comfort my aunt, who was weeping bitterly. When she was more composed, I asked for an explanation of what had taken place, and she gave it. The facts were simple enough. After my uncle and I had left for the mine, my aunt rose, expecting to find the kitchen fire alight as usual, and Annie busy making things neat for the day. To her astonishment, the kitchen was empty, the ashes in the grate were gray, and all was in disorder as it had been on the night before. She called Annie, but got no answer; she searched the cottage, but failed to find her; then, concluding that she had gone to the village on some errand, she set about doing the work herself. Several hours passed away; and, as there was still no sign of the missing girl, my aunt began to grow extremely alarmed. She had searched through and around the house with no effect. She now went down to the village and made several inquiries, but with no result. Annie had not been seen by any one that day.

Seriously alarmed by this time, she returned to the house, and looked again in Annie's room. Suddenly, her attention was attracted to the bed; she looked at it, and found that, although it was in disorder, it had not been slept in that night.

Having told her tale, my aunt looked at me, hoping that I might be able to say her fears for her child were unfounded. I could not; the utmost I could do was to counsel silence, and to try to buoy her up with hope. This I did.

"It may be all right, aunt," I said; "therefore it will be much better to keep our fears to ourselves. Don't say anything to my uncle; there will be time enough to do that when our last hope is gone."

After some little difficulty, she consented to follow my advice, and I persuaded her to return home. But the day was finished for me. After my aunt was gone, I could do nothing but think of Annie; the worst fears struggled to take possession of me, but I diligently thrust them away. I would not believe ill of my cousin.

About five o'clock, my uncle came up from the mine, and I proposed that we should knock off work for the day, and stroll home together. My uncle was in singularly good spirits; and during our walk home he frequently checked his mirth, avowing 'twas unnatural, and that something ill would come of it. As we drew near to the cottage, my heart beat painfully, and when we went in I looked anxiously about me.

My aunt was moving about preparing tea, and she was alone.

"Whar be the little woman?" asked my uncle, as we sat down to our meal.

I saw my aunt's face grow very pale, but she turned her head away and answered as carelessly as possible,

"She be gawn out!"

"Beant she coming in to tae?"

"Naw!"

The answer was conclusive, and the meal went on; my uncle eating heartily, while I was scarcely able to sip my cup of tea. When the meal was over, my uncle, according to his usual custom, went to his seat beside the fire, and lit his pipe.

He had been smoking for an hour or more, when a scene occurred which I can not recall without pain even now. All signs of the meal had been cleared away, and my aunt, with trembling hand, was about to lift down her work-basket from its shelf, when a knock came to the kitchen door; then the door was opened, and in came John Rudd.

He had a parcel for my aunt, which he delivered; he chattered for a few minutes, then he prepared to go.

His hand was on the latch of the door, when he paused and looked back.

"Say, missus," said he, "whar be Miss Awnie gawn to?"

My uncle looked up curiously; my aunt's cheeks grew as white as new-fallen snow.

"Whar be she gawn to?" she repeated, helplessly.

"Iss!" continued Rudd, "I seen her this marning i' Falmouth, but she were in a mighty hurry and didn't see me. She were dawn on the jatty, and she went aboard the steamer for Partsmouth."

Mr. Rudd paused, thunderstruck at the effect of his words.

My aunt, thoroughly exhausted by the strain that had been put upon her that day, sunk, sobbing and moaning, into a chair; my uncle, who had risen from his seat, stood glaring from one to another.

Presently he spoke.

"What be all this about my Awnie?" he cried. "Speak, some 'un."

My aunt continued to sob, John Rudd stared in a mystified manner at one and all.

"There's nothing to alarm anybody," I said; "it's all right."

But my uncle, who was growing terribly excited, hardly seemed to hear me.

"If thar be aught wrong wi' my little woman," he cried, "tell me; I ain't a child to be petted, nor a fool to be kept i' the dark. Speak, tell me what 'tis all about!"

So we told him all we knew, and, putting this and that together, he gathered at least one idea—that his child had, for some reason or other, voluntarily left her home. He stood like a man stupefied, scarcely gathering the sense of the situation, and dimly wondering why his wife received the news so violently. In his simplicity, he did not guess, as yet, that Annie's flight might have its origin in secret guilt and shame.

But when John Rudd was gone, and we were left to ourselves, I looked at my uncle and aunt, both so changed within the last few hours, and told them my suspicions of George Redruth. To my surprise they were received with blank amazement, then with indignation. My uncle averred that I had always disliked the young master, and it was but natural I should credit him with a dastardly deed; but he himself refused to believe for one moment in the young man's guilt. I felt convinced of it, however, in my own mind; and in order to make sure, I determined to go up to the master's house and ascertain if he were from home.

The moment my uncle heard of my determination he resolved to accompany me. On asking for the master, we were shown into the library; five minutes later the young man himself walked into the room.

The sight of him deprived me utterly of the power of speech; my uncle looked at me reproachfully, and was silent too.

George Redruth, who had just been dining, wore evening dress, and had never looked handsomer, or more thoroughly at his ease, in his life.

"Well!" he said, glancing at us pleasantly—he was evidently in

an after-dinner mood—"is there anything I can do for either of you?"

"Master Jarge," said my uncle, earnestly, "we'm in trouble, sir; in sore trouble."

"Indeed! I'm sorry to hear it."

"I knawed you'd be sarry, sir," continued my uncle, "though 'tain't no affair o' yourn, God knaws; but my daughter, sir, my little Annie, she be run'd away!"

"What!" he exclaimed. "Run away from home, do you mean? But why come to me? What can *I* do?"

"Naught, you can't do naught at all," said my uncle, "that's just it."

It was an awkward situation for us all, and we all felt it. My uncle nervously turned his hat round and round; while the young master grew more and more uncomfortable as every minute went by. I felt that some explanation was demanded, and I gave it.

"The fact is, sir," I said, "there is some villain at the bottom of it, and we want to find out who that villain is."

"And so you come to me! Really, I don't see the force of all this, and I have more important matters to detain me!"

He opened the door, and we, seeing that further conversation would be useless, left the room and the house.

During the walk home, my uncle never spoke. When we reached the cottage, he sunk down into a chair, and hid his face in his hands.

Nothing more could be done that night, so we all went to bed; but not to sleep. During the night I frequently heard my uncle walking with measured step up and down his room, and in the gray of the morning he came out to the kitchen to kindle a fire.

I looked at him, and scarcely knew him; his face was white and lined like that of an old man. He was quite calm; but there was a sad look in his eyes which spoke of deep-set pain.

I spoke to him of Annie, and told of a plan I had made to follow her and bring her back; but he sadly shook his head.

"Naw, lad," said he, "'tis best left alawn; she went o' her awn free will, and maybe some day she'll come back; and till she does, we'll wait, we'll wait!"

I felt he was right; it was better to wait. Even if we had been rich folk, which we were not, it would have been difficult to find her; as it was, the matter was hopeless. So we went on as usual with the old life. And yet it was not the old life, for the house was changed indeed—and there was ever one vacant chair.

Several days after that sad night, a letter came from Annie; it bore the London postmark, and ran as follows:

"MY DEAR PARENTS,—Do not grieve about me, for I am quite well and in want of nothing. Do not attempt to find me, it would be useless; but I shall soon come back, with God's blessing, and then you will learn why I left without a word. I am sorry, so sorry, for any trouble I have given you, and hope you will forgive me, for the sake of the happy days that are gone away. Your loving daughter, ANNIE."

My aunt read the letter aloud; then my uncle took it from her, looked at it for a long time, and finally, without a word, placed it on the fire—watching it till it was consumed. After that, for a long time to come, he never spoke of Annie again; but he drooped daily, like a man under the weight of some mortal pain.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT STORM.

IT was now late in the year, and the winter storms were beginning. There were intervals of calm cool weather, when the wind came from the east or south-east, and still frosty days, when a breath as cold as steel crept from the red sunrise of the north; but ever and again the trumpet of the tempest sounded westward and southward, and the ocean rose up before it in mountains of furious storm.

To stand on the sea-shore, or on the weather-worn cliffs, at such moments, was an experience not to be forgotten. With a sound of crashing thunder, with sheet-like flashes of flying foam, the mighty billows came rolling in; while far away, in the eye of the wind, the clouds gathered and baleful rays came and went, as if from the under world. Again and again, during these storms, the men forsook their work in the mine and clustered on the wind-swept crags; for the sound beneath was too terrible, and at each crash of the waters overhead the solid roofs of rock seemed about to topple in.

A new life-boat had come round from Falmouth during the summer; it was manned chiefly by workers in the mine, and I was their captain. We had tried the boat again and again in light weather, and were proud of her as life-boatsmen could be; so that, when need came, we were ready to do all that human hands could

do for the succor of shipwrecked souls. Fortunately, few vessels came that way, to need our aid in time of peril, for the great ships gave that lonely shore a wide berth, knowing its many perils. Sometimes, however, a coasting-vessel, heavily laden, came ashore on the outlying reefs, but, thanks to our sturdy boat, without much loss of life.

On the afternoon of the 22d day of November, 18—, there occurred such a phenomenon as I have seen only once in my life, and scarcely expect to see again. The ocean was dead calm and black as ink; the sooty clouds, with sheets of windless vapor trailing right down to the earth and water, kept stationary in a sort of sinister twilight; and the air was full of an extraordinary stillness, in which the concussion of the slightest sound—a cock crowing, a goat bleating, a human voice crying—was heard for miles away.

I had just been down the mine, where I found the men had ceased working, and had gathered in knots, whispering together. For all through the dark galleries and passages there came, from time to time, a curious tremor, like the shock of earthquake—sullen, sinister, terrible, making the heart, for some unknown reason, stand still with fear. Nor was this sound to be accounted for by the dashing of waves above that subaqueous darkness, since there was not a breath of wind, and the sea lay in sullen, moveless folds, scarcely vibrating.

"What is it, my lads?" I asked, accosting the first group of men, who were clustering on the central platform.

As I spoke, the tremor came again, so that the walls seemed tumbling over, the hard ground rocking under me, with a vibration which seemed to send a nameless terror into my very blood.

My uncle, who was there with the others, shook his head ominously.

"We dawn't rightly knaw," he said; "but we ha' hard 'un again and again, sounding like that. Seems threatening like, and I ha' bidden the gang knock off wark for to-day."

I knew that it was useless to remonstrate, for the men were evidently full of superstitious dread, which, if the truth must be told, I could not help sharing. They threw down their pickaxes and shovels, and followed me up the shaft.

We found Johnson there, who seemed astonished at our appearance, and when I told him what had taken place, looked savage.

"You're spoiling the men, Trelawney," he said. "Guess such nervous fancies are only fit for an old woman. Why, the sea's like a mill-pond, and there ain't a breath of wind."

"If you think it's only fancy," I replied, "come down with me and try. I'll give you a five-pound note if you stop down there half an hour."

He shrunk back and shook his head angrily, while the men, clustering round us, greeted my speech with a laugh.

"I shall report this," he cried, viciously. "A pack of cowards!"

And he walked off, amid an angry murmur from the men, who detested him cordially.

As the afternoon passed, and the dull leaden twilight increased, we saw, looking seaward, the phenomenon to which I have alluded: *two* suns, one round and purple, the other pink and ghostly, floating in the vapors to the west. Both were quite rayless, and they hung as it were some fifty yards from each other. Both seemed so near to us that one would have thought it possible to reach them with a bullet from a gun.

I can not express in words the strangely depressing and vaguely alarming effect of this phenomenon on myself and all who witnessed it. Nor was the effect lessened when the dimmer of the two suns suddenly disappeared, and the other changed in a moment from purple to jet-black. A jet-black ball in the midst of a waste of leaden gray.

"Lawd save us!" cried Martin Treruddock, an old fisherman, and one of our life-boat's crew. "Lawd save us! It looks like judgment, mates—like the Last Day!"

This, indeed, was the thought which was passing through all our minds. We stood looking in suspense till the black sun disappeared, and total darkness came; and then, with no little foreboding, we scattered to our homes.

But in the night, as we lay sleeping in our beds, we learned that what we had witnessed betokened, not any supernatural disturbance, but the gathering of such a tempest as has seldom been seen, before or since, on those shores. It came with fearful lightning and close-following thunder, followed by drops of black and hideous hail; and then, with a crash and a scream and a cry, the wind rushed from the sea. I lay in my bed in the cottage, thinking every moment that the house would come down, shaking as it did to its foundations, or the roof be blown away; and every minute the blasts grew more terrific, not coming in broken gusts as during ordinary storms, but in concussions of solid air, which struck the walls with blows as of a battering-ram, and made every stone in the structure clatter like a loose tooth.

Presently, I saw my uncle, partially dressed and holding a light, enter my chamber.

"Hugh, my lad, be you asleep?"

"As if any one could sleep on such a night! I thought yesterday's portent meant something. The storm has come!"

"Mother be frighted badly," he returned. "She be praying, lad, dawn i' the kitchen. Lawd save us; hark to that!" he added, as a flash of fiery lightning filled the room, and wind and thunder mingled together in awful reverberation.

There was no resting in bed, so I slipped on my clothes and went down with my uncle to the kitchen, where I found my aunt full of superstitious terror. She had got out the old Bible, and, having opened at random, was reading in a low voice from one of the Psalms. I did my best to allay her fears, but succeeded very badly.

For the greater part of the night we remained sitting up. The thunder and lightning lasted well on till morning, and when they ceased, it became possible for the first time to realize the frightful violence of the gale. It was, as I afterward learned, a well-defined cyclone.

With the first peep of daylight, I seized my hat and moved to the door.

"Whar be'st gawing, lad?" cried my aunt.

"Down to the shore. It's a high spring-tide, and I want to see if the life-boat's snug."

"Na, na," she cried, "stawp yar!"

But I only smiled at her fears, and hastened away. No sooner had I left the cottage than the wind caught me, and almost dashed me from my feet; but I stooped my head, and plunged right on in the teeth of the gale. The day was now breaking with lurid sullen rays, behind my back. Short as the distance was to the sea-shore, I thought I should never reach it, so terrible was the fury of the blast! More than once I had actually to lie down on the ground and let it trample over me! And with the blast came hail and heavy rain, blinding me, smiting my cheek like whipcord, and drawing blood, so that I could scarcely see a yard before my face.

At last I gained the cliff, and here I had much ado to prevent myself from being lifted up bodily and blown away. But I threw myself on my face, and looked seaward. Nothing was visible, only driving mists and vapors; but right below there was a blinding whiteness of the line of breakers, and thence there rose up to me, together with the wild wisps of solid wind-swept water, the deafening thunder-roar of the tumultuously surging sea.

Gaining courage presently, as the light in the east grew clearer, I crawled down the path leading to the shore. As I went, I was sometimes flattened like a rag against the rocks, by the sheer force of the wind; but I persevered, and at last, with God's help, reached the bottom.

It was high tide; the roaring billows were thundering up close to the cliff, and the shallow creek surrounding the boat-house was as white as milk with the churning of the waters. I then perceived, to my consternation, that the gale had struck the boat-house with such force as to sweep the wooden roof away and dash it into fragments against the cliffs. I crept on to the door, which was on the lee and sheltered side, drew forth from my pocket the key of the padlock, opened it, and went in. The great boat lay there unharmed, but was half full of water, fresh from the dark rain-clouds, salt from the angry sea. One of the oars had been lifted out and snapped like a rotten twig, but that was all.

Suddenly, as I stood here sheltering from the gale, I heard a sound from seaward, like the sound of a gun. I started, listening. In a minute the sound was repeated. Yes; it was a gun at sea, and the sound could have only one signification—a vessel in distress!

Quitting the boat-house, I stood on the shore, and strained my eyes against the drifting vapors and blinding wind; but I could distinguish nothing—indeed, so great was the rainy darkness, that my vision could not penetrate beyond twenty or thirty yards from the storm-swept shore. But if I needed any fresh assurance that a ship of some sort was struggling with the elements not far away, it came to me in another faint report of a gun, and finally, in the red light of a rocket, which shot up through the black vapors like a shooting star, and disappeared!

CHAPTER XII.

THE SURVIVORS OF THE WRECK.

QUITTING the storm-swept shore, I climbed half way up the crags, and endeavored, with straining eyes, to penetrate the darkness seaward, but although it was now broad day, the clouds of wind-blown vapor still covered the troubled sea.

Greatly agitated, I made my way up the cliff, and reached the summit, where I found that an excited group, composed of fishermen and miners, had already gathered. Among them was my uncle, who addressed me eagerly the moment I appeared.

"Did you say the lights, lad? Sure as death, there be a ship on the rocks out thar!"

"On the South Stack," said an old fisherman, naming an ugly reef which lay right across the mouth of the bay, three quarters of a mile from shore.

"Are you sure she's there?" I asked, eagerly.

"Sure enough," was the reply. "When the last light went oop, I saw 'm—leastways, summat black amang the mist and foam."

There was nothing for it but to wait and watch, for to go to the rescue in the teeth of such a storm was out of the question, even if we had been able to launch the life-boat through the billows madly breaking on the shore. The wind still blew with extraordinary fury, though signs were not wanting that its strength was partially broken; and still, with thunderous roar, the waves came rolling in, sending up a cloud of white foam that reached to the very summit of the cliff where we were crouching; and still, trailing as it were on the waves and belching hither and thither, like thick smoke from a furnace, the mist came driving shoreward, blotting the sea from sight.

From time to time the gun sounded again; then it ceased altogether; and no more rockets rose, to indicate the whereabouts of the hidden vessel. Was all over? Had the cruel seas devoured her, with the helpless souls on board? Sick with suspense, we waited and watched; almost certain that the last appeal had been made, and that all was over.

Suddenly, the storm-smoke blew upward here and there, leaving visible wild patches of tossing water. Simultaneously, the wind lessened, coming not in solid phalanx, but in gusts, fitful though terrible—very cannon blasts of air.

A wild cry rose, and all hands were suddenly pointed seaward.

Then, straining my eyes through the blinding rain, I saw something like a white wall of vapor rising right out to sea in the direction of the South Stack, and right in its center the black outline of a large vessel, wedged firmly on the jagged rocks. For a moment she was visible, then the vapors blotted her once more from sight. A minute afterward, she was again visible, this time more distinctly, so that I could clearly discern a black funnel and two masts, a mainmast intact, a foremast broken off just above the decks. She was a large screw-steamer, with her back broken right across, and only saved from sinking by the very rocks which had destroyed her.

How she had got into that fatal position, it was difficult to tell. Possibly her propeller had snapped, as is not uncommon with such

vessels, or the water had swamped her engines and put them out; in either of which cases, seeing how little sail she would be able to carry at the best, it had been a vain task to attempt to beat off a lee shore in the face of such a gale.

She was so far away, and the mists were still so troublesome, that it was difficult to tell if there were any souls still left on board. More than once I fancied that I discerned shapes like human forms clinging to or lashed to the rigging of the mainmast, but it was impossible to distinguish them with any certainty.

However, my mind was now made up. The life-boat must be launched and manned without delay. I turned to the men and said a much, but they shrunk back in unconcealed terror at the mere proposition. And, indeed, it seemed a hopeless affair! Although the wind had certainly fallen a little, its falling seemed to augment, rather than to lessen, the fury of the sea. The waters between us and the vessel were terrible even to look upon; and it seemed impossible that even a life-boat could live among them. Even if she lived, how could the strength of men propel her right in the teeth of the tempest?

While the men stood hesitating, the mists rose all round the ship, and we saw, to our amazement, that a stir was taking place upon her decks. Yes; there could be no doubt of the fact; a boat was preparing to leave her sides, and, freighted with human beings, push away for the shore.

Never shall I forget that sight! Just in the lee of the crippled vessel, under the cloud of white smoke which rose for a moment high above her remaining mast, there was a heaving patch where the boat could float in safety; but beyond it, and nearer to us the waves rose again in awful crested billows whirling and swirling toward the shore. Seen from our point of vantage, the boat seemed a mere cockle-shell; but we saw the tiny specks crowding into it, while the broken water streamed like milk over the vessel's decks and down her shoreward sides.

"God help them!" I cried aloud, and more than one voice echoed my prayer.

The boat pushed off. The under-swell caught her and rushed her along at lightning speed, and in a few moments she reached the broken water. There the wind seemed to smite her sidelong, and she was buried instantaneously in the trough of the sea. But she reappeared, half smothered in surf and flying foam. Then we saw rapidly approaching her, a mountainous and awful wave!

The little boat, as if it were a living thing, seemed to see it too,

and to struggle to escape! Sick with horror, I covered my eyes; I could not look. Then I heard a deep groan from the men around me, and looked again.

The boat had gone, never to reappear. The mighty wave had broken and was roaring shoreward, and amid its foam I saw, or seemed to see, shapes that struggled, sunk, and died.

"Man the life-boat!" I cried. "Quick, lads! Follow me!"

My uncle gripped me by the arm.

"Too late, lad! There's ne'er a sawl aboard!"

"Look yonder!" I answered, pointing seaward. "There are living men on the deck still, and in the rigging. Come!"

The lads, who were English born, and had their hearts in the right places, responded with a cheer, and down the path we rushed till we reached the shore. Entering the boat-house, we soon had the boat bailed and ready for launching, when I first realized, to my dismay, that we were short-handed, several of my best men being away. But two strong lads from the mine volunteered, and my uncle made a third; and so we formed a crew. To every man I gave a cork life-belt, and tied on one myself. Then, springing to my place in the stern, I urged on my men, as with shouts and yells, scarcely heard amid the roar of water, they ran the boat into the creek.

Each man knew his place. They urged the boat, bow forward, into the surge, and waded with it, those the furthest from shore wading breast-deep in the waves. Thrice we were beaten back, and I thought the boat would have been crushed to pieces on the beach, but at last she floated—the men leaped in and took their places—the oars smote the boiling surge, and out we crept to sea.

Once fairly afloat, we realized for the first time the strength and fury of the storm. Clouds of flying foam covered us, the strong seas caught the oars and almost tore them from the grasp, and for a time we scarcely seemed to gain a foot of way. But the lads put out their strength, and sheer muscle and bold heroic will conquering at last, the life-boat left the shore.

And now I alone, standing in the stern-sheets, with the steering oar in my hand, could see what mountainous seas we had to pass before we could reach the doomed vessel, which was now scarcely discernible through the sheet of low-flying spray. As some great wave came near, curling high above us, I cheered on the men, and we met it with a shock like thunder and a rattle of every plank of which the boat was made. More than once the seas made a clean broach over us, but the air-tight compartments and cushions of

cork kept us from actually foundering. On we went, with the light of the kindling east turning from red to reddish-gold behind us, and the mists, struck by the new radiance, thinning to seaward; and so, after a fierce tussle with wind and water, we came in full sight of the doomed vessel.

Stuck fast on the cruel reef, her back broken, she was struggling like a crippled bird—lying over, with her decks and funnel inclined toward the shore, and quivering through and through with every blow of the strong metallic waves. A pillar of smoky foam, ever-vanishing, ever renewed, hung over her in the air, and from time to time the waters foamed over her weather side, and streamed over the splitting decks.

At first I could discern no sign of life, but as we drew nearer and nearer, I saw one or two figures clinging in the rigging, from which many of their comrades had doubtless been washed away. They saw us coming, for one of them waved something white.

"Pull for your lives!" I cried. "There are men aboard!"

The lads answered me with a cheer, and the boat shot forward to the steady sweep of their united oars till we were within a hundred yards of the steamer.

Then I saw a sight which filled all my soul with fear and pity. Lashed to, or clinging to, the mainmast, was the solitary figure of a woman. I knew her sex by the wild hair falling over her shoulders, and the curious feminine grace of her form, visible through a dark cloak that had been thrown hastily upon her shoulders; but her head was drooping and her face hidden, and she did not seem conscious of what was taking place.

I told the men that a woman was there, and though they needed no new incentive to give them strength, their faces grew more animated, and I knew they would have faced fire as well as water in such a cause. In a few minutes more we were close at hand, rising and falling on the white surge in the vessel's lee.

Then the woman raised her head, and looked in our direction. The men saw her, and gave another cheer; but I—I could have swooned away in consternation. My head went round. I looked again and again.

Either I was mad, or dreaming, or the face I gazed upon was that of the love of my boyhood—Madeline Graham!

CHAPTER XIII.

MADELINE GRAHAM.

YES: I knew her in a moment.

The lurid light of the tempestuous morning shone full upon her face, and on the clinging dress and cloak, which more expressed than hid her lovely form. Her eyes were wildly fixed, her face pale as death; but in her features there was a splendid self-possession far removed from common fear.

Though so many years had passed since we had last met, she was still the same; only taller and more womanly, and even more strangely beautiful than when she had first shed love and rapture on my boyish heart.

She was fastened to the mast by a rope. Her feet were bare, and I saw, to my horror, that all she wore save the great fur cloak was a night-dress of white cotton, reaching to her feet. Her hair fell over her shoulders in loose and dripping folds, descending almost to her waist. Peering more closely, I perceived that her lips were blue, and her form shivering with cold; indeed, it was a miracle that she had not perished in the chill of that cruel night.

From that moment I saw nothing but that one figure; all others were blurred and practically unseen. In my wild amazement and eagerness to reach her, I could have sprung into the tossing waves.

The vessel lay sidelong, her decks turned toward the shore; and the fierce billows, striking her seaward sides, broke with a thunderous roar and a cloud of spray, and then came surging down the slippery decks in a thin sheet of foam, boiling round the naked feet of the solitary maiden.

We hung off for a minute, to let one great sea go by; then we swept alongside. What followed was more like a dream than waking reality. But with an eager cry I leaped upon the deck, and staggered up toward Madeline Graham.

Twice I slipped to my knees, and was driven back and bruised against the bulwarks; but the third time I succeeded, and reaching her side, clung to the mast, and gazed into her face.

"Madeline!" I cried.

Her eyes met mine, but she gave no sign of recognition. It was clear that what I remembered so vividly she had utterly forgotten.

Drawing my clasp-knife, I cut her free, and put my arms around

her to bear her back to the boat. The decks rocked and split beneath us; she clung to me, as if in terror. Then I watched my chance, and, raising her bodily in my arms, carried her to the vessel's side, and handed her to the men.

I was about to follow her, when I was attracted by a wild scream, and, turning, I perceived the figure of another woman crawling on the deck, close to the companion. She was dark-complexioned, like a mulatto, and almost naked. Without a moment's hesitation, I ran to her, and half lifted, half dragged her, to the vessel's side.

I now perceived that we had saved, in addition to the two women, two white seamen and a black man, who afterward turned out to be the ship's cook. I clung to the bulwarks, and looked round, searching for any other signs of life.

"Come, lad, come!" cried my uncle. "Quick! the ship's breaking up."

I looked at the strange sailors, who sat shivering in the bottom of the life-boat.

"Are there no more souls aboard?" I cried.

"Not one," they answered. All the rest had perished in the long-boat, in the fatal attempt to reach the shore.

There was not a moment to be lost. The vessel was evidently doomed, and every shock of the sea threatened to complete the work of destruction. The black funnel, almost wrenched out of the bursting decks, was leaning over terribly, and threatening every moment to crash down bodily and destroy the life-boat.

I leaped in, and scrambled to my place in the stern. On the seat close by me was Madeline, her eyes half closed, her neck resting on the gunwale; and at her feet was the colored woman, moaning and crying.

It was but the work of a moment to strip off my pilot-coat and wrap it round Madeline's half naked limbs; but while I did so the men cried impatiently, and pushed off.

"Give way, lads!" I cried. "Now! Pull for your lives!"

Away we went through the surging sea. Not a minute too soon did we leave the vessel; for ere we were thirty yards away the decks were rent asunder, and the huge funnel toppled over and fell like a battering-ram upon the bulwarks, which broke like tinder beneath the blow.

With wind and sea to urge us on, we flew shoreward, and the strength of the oarsmen was needed rather to break than to increase our lightning speed. Again and again the great seas rose behind

and threatened to ingulf us; while gripping the steering oar I watched them, and guided the brave boat.

At last we approached the shore, and saw a great crowd waiting upon the shingle and swarming upon the cliff. Tossing like a cork upon the waters, we waited our chance, and then, after one huge wave had spent itself, and there was a momentay surcease of the water's power, I headed the boat's bow for the creek, and we rowed in.

As the keel struck the sands, a dozen men rushed in waist-deep to seize the boat; our men joined them, and then, with a long pull, a strong pull, and a great ringing cheer, the boat was hauled high and dry, and we were safe.

My first thought was of Madeline. I lifted her out in my strong arms, and carried her into the shelter of the boat-house. Her face and hands were cold as ice, and she was still swooning. I called out for brandy; and thank God! a man handed me a full flask. Supporting her head upon my shoulder, I moistened her lips with the raw spirit, and once more in my wild anxiety, I breathed her name.

Once more she opened her eyes and looked upon me; still there was no sign whatever of recognition.

She looked wildly round her, saw the rough but kindly faces on every side, and murmured:

"Where am I? Who calls me?"

"You are quite safe," I cried, "and among friends."

Again she looked up unto my face, as if stupefied. I held the flask to her lips, and she seemed to swallow a little; then a shudder ran through her frame, and she released herself from my hold.

I placed her on one of the wooden seats, and bent over her, tenderly watching her. Gradually I saw the color come back to her cheeks, but very faintly.

"Anita!" she murmured, and looked round as if seeking someone.

The rough fellows, clustering in the boat-house, murmured sympathizingly; whispered encomiums on her beauty passed from mouth to mouth. And indeed she looked strangely lovely, even in her desolation—her eyes brightening, her color coming and going, her hair streaming over her shoulders, her neck and arms and feet as white as driven snow!

As her strength and consciousness returned, a new awe fell upon me, and I stood timidly watching her.

She gazed at me again.

"Now I understand," she said. "Tell me of the others; are they saved?"

I told her the truth, and again she shuddered, half closing her eyes, as if to shut out the picture of the horrors of the wreck. At that moment some of the life-boat's men appeared, leading with them the colored woman, who, the instant she saw Madeline, sprung toward her and knelt by her side, hysterically sobbing, and kissing her hands.

Madeline bent over her and addressed her in some foreign tongue —Portuguese, I afterward discovered. She answered volubly in the same speech. I suspected the truth, that this black girl was an attendant or waiting-maid of some sort, and that Madeline was her mistress.

Turning to one of the rescued sailors, who had now approached and was phlegmatically chewing a quid as if he had just been comfortably landed from a passing boat, I questioned him concerning the lost vessel. She was a large trading-steamer, he said, bound from Demerara to the port of London; her name, the "Valparaiso;" her captain one John Stetson, a good sailor, who had been killed by the falling of the foremast, and swept overboard. Her passage across the Atlantic had been smooth and pleasant; but the night before she had experienced all the strength of the great gale, and while contending with it had broken her propeller. After that, she had tried to lie-to under sail, and had she found sea-room would doubtless have been able to weather the storm; but, as ill luck would have it, the rocks of Cornwall were right under her lee, and the wind and sea swept her down upon them.

I questioned him concerning that episode of the boat. He explained that two of the boats had been smashed into fragments when the ship first struck. The long-boat remained, and at daybreak, after the captain perished, the first officer, fancying that the ship was doomed, determined to make for shore. All the crew followed him but my informant and two others, who preferred sticking by the steamer to facing certain death. The men, in fact, were mad with fright and drink combined, and for this reason, perhaps, altogether forgot to wait for Madeline, who had gone below.

So the last boat left the ship. It had not gone far when Madeline reappeared. She would have been swept away but for the assistance of the sailors, who strapped her to the mast as the only chance of safety; and as she stood there terror-stricken, she saw the boat

ingulfed with all its crew—the same sad sight which we had seen from land.

It turned out, on further questioning, that Miss Graham was the only passenger, and occupied, with her colored maid, the captain's own cabin. Her father, a rich Demerara planter, had died some months before she took passage, leaving her a great inheritance. I had no time to answer for myself the many questions which crowded upon my mind—Why Madeline had come to England? Whether she had relations surviving in the old country? Whether any living person, lover or friend, had the right to protect her? But I looked at her again, and thought how different she was from all the other women I had known, in her queenly grace and warmth of beauty. Beside her, even my cousin Annie would have looked coarse and common.

But there was no time to be lost, if she was to escape the consequences of that night's exposure. She was still dripping wet, and the morning air was bitterly cold.

"You must not stay here," I said, approaching her, "or you will catch your death. Do you think you can ascend the cliffs? My aunt's cottage is close by, and I should like to take you there at once."

She rose at once, shivering, and took my arm. Half leading, half-supporting her, I guided her out of the boat-house and up the steep ascent leading to the summit of the crag, my uncle helping her upon the other side. Some of the others followed, leading the colored girl.

It was a steep climb; and before we had gone far we found that her strength was failing her, so that we were compelled to raise her bodily in our arms; but she was light and fragile enough, and, for my own part, I could have carried her like a child.

Once on the summit, we rested again, while some of the men went in chase of a moor pony, one of the several grazing on the moor hard by. When it was secured, and bridled and bitted with a stout rope, I lifted her upon it, and placed the black girl by her side; and thus, still holding her and walking by her side, while the men followed behind like a procession, I conducted her to our cottage, and handed her over to the care of my kind aunt.

Thus God, in a mysterious fashion, had restored to me the being who had been to me for so many years a sweet memory and a delightful vision. I felt strangely happy, yet troubled; unable yet to realize what had taken place. When my aunt had led Madeline to a chamber upstairs, where she tended her with motherly sympathy

and tenderness, I sat in the kitchen, waiting and wondering, like one in a dream.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SUNBEAM IN THE COTTAGE.

It seemed as if the days of my boyhood had come back to me. Never since then had I experienced such feelings as now filled my heart, for with her fading they had faded, and during the years of our separation I had passed my time with tolerable tranquillity; but now that she had been so miraculously restored to me, the old fire was rekindled in my soul, and I became another man.

Her very presence in the house that night drove away all thoughts of sleep. I paced my room with restless footsteps, and when the dawn broke I hurried off to the shore.

What a change had come! The wind had died, the sea was like glass, and the only record left of the storm was the wreckage which was being cast upon the sands. Early as I was, there were others before me, gazing eagerly seaward, and searching along the cliffs for a prize.

I took a walk round by the mine, and, having made a hasty inspection, I hurried back to the cottage, eagerly hoping, yet half dreading, to see Madeline. But I was disappointed. My uncle had gone to his work. My aunt was busy, but alone. I looked round the kitchen, and my heart gave a great throb. After all, the events of the past night were real. There, hanging beside the fire, was the cloak—a rich mantle of silk and fur—which had been clinging round Madeline's form when I took her from the wreck.

I inquired eagerly for Madeline. "Have you seen her, aunt?" I asked. "Is she well? How does she look?"

I suppose there was something peculiar in my manner, for my aunt gazed at me curiously, and said,

"Who be she, Hugh? Dost knaw who she be?"

"Yes," I replied; "she is Miss Madeline Graham. She was at school with me long ago. Just before my father died she left, and I have never seen her since."

At that moment the door opened, and the figure of the black woman appeared. In the light of day she looked foreign indeed—a slight, delicate girl, shivering with the cold of our raw climate. I asked her how her mistress did. She made no answer, but stared vacantly at me; and I then discovered that she knew no language

but the one in which she had spoken to Madeline. I looked at my aunt, and she understood—she went herself into the bedroom to see how her guest was getting on.

She was away only a few minutes, yet it seemed to me an hour. When she came back, she smiled at my anxious look.

"It be all right, lad, it be all right," she said. "The lady be naw the warse o' her watting; but she be tired, and will stawp in bed to-day. She be a pratty creature, Hugh, and rich, I darsay; for her fingers be covered wi' dawmond rings."

All that day, overcome by the fatigue through which she had passed, Madeline remained in her chamber; while I, utterly unable to work, hung like a restless spirit about the house. The next morning she awoke refreshed; and when we three sat at breakfast, she astonished us all by appearing amongst us, fully dressed, and looking bright and well.

Her advent caused a general exclamation; my aunt ran forward to her assistance; my uncle placed our most comfortable chair beside the fire; while I, dumb and powerless, stood in the background doing nothing. Madeline! Could this be Madeline?—the little girl I had dreamed of all these years, whose hands had been covered with my passionate kisses and marked with my tears, and who had even wept a little herself at parting with me; could this be the same?—this glorious creature, with dreamy black eyes, warm brown skin, and glorious black hair! Her form was tall and straight as a willow; she moved like a queen.

As all her own clothes had been lost in the wreck, she wore a dress of my aunt; over it she had thrown the cloak which she had worn on the wreck, and which was now thoroughly dried. She came forward languidly, leaning on the shoulder of her black attendant, and sunk down into the chair which my uncle had placed for her, while the native began crying and kissing her hands. They spoke together in the foreign tongue; then Madeline raised her eyes and looked quietly around. All this while I had been standing in the background, longing, yet dreading to speak to her; for I saw clearly enough that to her all the past was forgotten; but now, as her eyes swept the room and finally rested with a look of recognition on my face, I felt the hot blood mount to my temples.

"Am I mistaken?" she asked, softly; "did you take me from the wreck?"

I bowed my head. In a moment all her languor disappeared, the old fire darted from her eyes, the old flush suffused her cheeks—she was the Madeline of my childhood once more. She looked at

her hands, with one quick movement pulled off the most valuable of her rings, and held it toward me.

"Will you not take it?" she said, with a bright smile. "You saved my life."

Her whole manner was that of a lady speaking to an inferior. Under my excitement I hardly noticed it. Scarcely knowing what I did, I sprung forward and took the ring; then, eagerly kissing her hand, I placed it again upon her finger.

"Madeline," I said, "don't you know me? Madeline—Miss Graham!"

She looked at me more critically, and shook her head.

"Have you forgotten Munster's," I said, "and Hugh Trelawney?"

If I expected a wild outburst of pleasure at the mention of my own name, I was quickly disappointed. She only smiled; and, with her eyes fixed upon vacancy as if she was reviewing the past, said,

"Munster's? Hugh Trelawney? Oh, yes; of course I remember *now!* Hugh Trelawney was the nicest of those Munster boys, and we were friends; but," she added, fixing her eyes anxiously upon me, "surely *you* are not that boy?"

"Yes," I replied, "I am Hugh Trelawney!"

Her eyes opened wider, she glanced from me to my uncle and aunt, then round the kitchen, then she was silent.

I felt that some explanation was due to her, and I gave it. I told her of my father's death—of the kindness of my uncle and aunt, and of my subsequent life at St. Gurlott's.

"St. Gurlott's?" she said. "Is this St. Gurlott's in Cornwall?"

I answered in the affirmative

"Then I have an aunt living in a place of that name," she continued. "Perhaps you may know her: her name is Mrs. Redruth."

"Lawd a mussey! wha, that be our master's mother!" broke in my aunt. But I added,

"Are you sure it's the same, Miss Graham? This Mrs. Redruth has a son who owns the mine."

"Yes, I know—my cousin George!" she answered; while my heart misgave me at the familiar manner in which she mentioned the name. "Oh, it must be the same," she continued, enthusiastically, "and to think I should be shipwrecked here, of all places

in the world! Mr. Trelawney, are they far away? Would it be possible to let them know that I am here?"

"It will be quite possible. Shall I take a message?"

"Will you be so kind? Perhaps if you tell her the story and show her this," she continued, drawing a quaint signet ring from her finger, "my aunt will come to me. This was my dear father's ring, and she knew it well, for he always wore it—and he had it on even when he died!"

I took the ring from her hand and started off on my mission.

The events of the last few hours had made me a changed being. I began to wonder if it was all real; whether I had really seen Madeline, and whether the one real romance of my life had been ruthlessly swept away. It was clear to me now that she thought little of the past, and cared for it even less. While I had been living upon the memory of those dear days, she had let other events obliterate it entirely from her mind. Well, it was clear I must do the same. I must deliver her up to the custody of her relations as coldly as if she were a stranger who had casually been cast in my path for a day.

Having made my decision, I became calmer, and walked with a steady step up to Redruth House. I inquired for the young master; learned that he had left for London two days before. I asked for the mistress, and she saw me. She listened to my story quietly enough; when I showed her the ring, her white face flushed, her hand trembled, and her eyes filled with tears.

"It is my brother's, my poor brother's," she said, more to herself than to me; then she added, "My niece is at your cottage, you say?"

"Yes, madame."

"Tell her, I will come to her at once."

I left the house and, instead of returning to the cottage, walked straight down to the mine. Where was the use of my returning to Madeline: to stand by and see that grim and stony-hearted woman bring to her queenly eyes the light of happiness, to her lips the cry of joy, which the sight of my face had failed to do? No; such a sight might have roused all that was bad in my nature. I was better away.

All day I worked with a fierce persistence which alarmed me. I looked at myself in my mining suit, then recalled Madeline as I had seen her that morning—with her soft hands sparkling with gems, and the black servant crouching at her feet—and realized more than ever the distance that divided us from one another.

She was the mistress, born to command; I, the servant, whose business it was to obey.

I returned home in the evening, and found the cottage much the same as it had always been. Madeline was gone.

"She be up at Redruth House, Hugh," said my aunt. "The awful missus came and took her away, and right glad she was to go, poor lass!"

She showed me a five-pound note which Madeline had given her, borrowing it from her aunt to do so. She put the note into an old work-box where most of her treasures were kept, and set about getting the tea, imagining that the romance of last night's wreck had ended.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER THE SPELL.

For some days after that, I saw nothing whatever of Madeline; indeed, so close was she kept in the great house that she might never have existed at all. I began to think that she had taken her departure from Cornwall, but I was wrong. One day, the seventh from that on which the life-boat had brought Madeline to shore, I made a minute inspection of the mine, which every day grew more dangerous, and came up from my work covered with filth from head to foot. I had passed the last ladder, and stood on *terra firma*, at the mouth of the mine, dazzled by the quick transformation from pitch darkness to broad daylight, when my ears were struck by the sound of a voice which passed like sudden music through my frame. I rubbed my eyes and looked about me, and there, not far from where I stood, was my old sweetheart. She was dressed now in an elegant costume of gray, which fitted her to perfection; a little hat with long plumes was on her head, and her face, looking lovelier than ever, glowed and sparkled in the light: with her rich brown skin and sparkling black eyes, her erect carriage, graceful tread, she looked like some Eastern princess! She was walking toward the spot where I stood; George Redruth was beside her; while behind followed the black girl, Anita, her dark eyes fixed upon her mistress. This sudden encounter had so unnerved me that, for a moment, it deprived me of the power both of speech and motion. Quickly recovering myself, however, I was about to move away, and so avoid embarrassment, when the master's voice arrested me.

"Trelawney," he said; "one moment." I paused.

"Yes, sir."

"Miss Graham wishes to go down the mine. I tell her it is impossible. What do you say? Is it fit for a lady?"

I was about to reply when Madeline interposed.

"Don't worry about it, George," she said, "I've abandoned the idea." Then, stepping up to me, she held forth her little gloved hand. I bowed over it, but did not take it, giving as an excuse that I was not fit to approach her.

"I dare say you were in quite as forlorn a condition the other morning when you snatched me from the wreck," she said; "yet you did not hesitate then, when your own life was in peril. Mr. Trelawney, take my hand."

I did as she requested, I clasped the little hand in both of mine and raised it respectfully to my lips. In doing so, I caught a glimpse of George Redruth's face: it was black as the pit mouth.

"Now, my dear Madeline," he said, impatiently, "shall we go back?"

But Madeline was not ready, or perhaps she was too imperious to be so ordered by her cousin. She had abandoned all intention of descending the mine; but she was, nevertheless, anxious to inspect the outside of it.

"But you can go," she said. "Mr. Trelawney will escort me."

"Nonsense!" returned her cousin. "Trelawney has got his work to attend to. I will stay."

And he did stay, for fully two hours; at the end of which time she allowed him to take her away.

Three other days passed without a sign from her; then I encountered her again. It was in the evening, when I was walking home. This time she was alone; except for the servant, who walked at a respectful distance behind her. She came up to me unreservedly, and again held forth her hand. Having shaken hands with her, I paused, not very well knowing what to do; when she helped me.

"I came to walk back with you," she said. "Do you mind?"

"*I mind?*" I repeated, in amazement. "You forget, Miss Graham, it is an honor for me to walk beside you."

She gave a little impatient toss of her head, and we walked on together. For some time not a word was spoken, but I felt that she was watching me keenly. Presently she said,

"Do you know what I have been doing, Mr. Trelawney?"

"No."

"I have been trying to find in you one trace of the boy I knew years ago, at Munster's—and I have failed."

"I don't understand."

"No? Well, I will explain. The boy I knew was kind to me; frank, open-hearted, generous. You are somewhat unfriendly; reserved, harsh, and, if I may say so, churlish. Why are you so changed?"

"I am not changed, Miss Graham; or, if I am, it is but with the tide of fortune, which has ebbed and not flowed with me since we met before. When we were at Munster's I believed we were equals, but now—"

"Yes; now—"

"You are Miss Madeline Graham; I am the overseer of your cousin's mine."

"Then you wish us to remain strangers?"

"I think it would be better."

"Ah! you are crueler than I thought; if you will not accept my friendship for the sake of the old days when we were boy and girl together, you will, at least, have some pity upon me. I am lonely and among strangers here. You seem like an old friend. If you will suffer me to talk to you sometimes it will make my stay here more pleasant."

Her pleading won the day, and we became friends. I never went to Redruth House, and she never came to the cottage. I never sought her, but quite innocently and frankly she sought me. We often went on the moor when, after my long day's work, I was making my way home, and I could not regard these meetings as purely accidental on her part. She was always accompanied by the black girl, until one evening, when she appeared alone.

"You are looking for Anita?" said Madeline, noting my glance. "She has gone to London with my aunt's maid, and will not return till close on midnight. My cousin counseled my staying at home to-night, or allowing him to accompany me. I knew I should not want for company, so refused to submit. I may not enjoy these walks much longer."

"What! are you going away?" I asked, in some alarm.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Perhaps! I don't know; certainly I shall have to go sooner or later, but I trust it may not be sooner. When I was shipwrecked here I was on my way to London, to take up my abode with some other relations. They are troubling me with questions, so I have sent up Anita to satisfy them as to my safety. Yet I suppose I shall some day have to go."

She tried to speak carelessly, yet I fancied I detected a ring of regret in her voice, and I quailed before the feeling of desolation which her words brought to my heart.

In that one sentence she had unwittingly shown to me myself—revealed to me the terrible secret which I had been vainly trying to crush from my heart. Even as she had influenced my boyhood, she influenced my manhood.

I loved her with the same unthinking love which had filled my soul as a boy—loved her even while I felt that such a love might be the means of blighting my life. I knew that no good could come of it, for was she not as far removed from me as the moon was removed from the sea?—and yet I felt at that moment that to love her so, be it only for one hour, was worth whole centuries of pain.

She walked with me as far as the cottage, and, pausing at the little wicket gate, gave me her hand.

"Good-night, Mr. Trelawney," she said, softly; "it is not good-bye yet!"

Again I raised her hand, and pressed it to my lips; then I dimly remember entering the cottage; but all seemed unreal—save the one overmastering fact that, fool that I was, I was the slave of Madeline Graham!

CHAPTER XVI.

BY THE SEA.

THE next day was Sunday. I rose early and put on my idling clothes, a dark suit of tweed. That I took more than usual pains with myself may be assumed from the fact that my aunt, as I strolled in to breakfast, started, and looked at me from head to foot in no little surprise. Then she sighed deeply, and glanced at my uncle, who, also dressed for the day, in a suit of solemn black, was sitting moodily by the fire.

For many days past, there had been noticeable a curious change in my uncle's manner. I scarcely observed it at the time, for my heart was too full of other and pleasanter impressions; but afterward, when I came to think it over, I remembered vividly what had previously passed without remark. To begin with, he looked at least ten years older. His old cheery laugh was gone; and his eyes had a hard, far-away look, very different to their former happy brightness. Sometimes, as we sat together, he would rise abruptly

and pass out of the house, leaving the meal on the table untouched. My aunt seemed to forget her own trouble in watching his; and nothing could surpass the silent tenderness with which she waited upon him, never breathing a word of her solicitude, but showing in a hundred gentle ways her wifely sympathy and devotion.

On the present occasion we breakfasted very late; and as we sat, there came to us, faintly wafted over the distant moorland, the sound of the church bells. My uncle started, listened, and drew back his chair. Then, before we could say a word, he seized his hat, and left the house.

"Gaw after him, Hugh!" cried my aunt—adding quickly, "Na, stay! Maybe 'tis better to let 'un be. Oh, Hugh, Hugh, he's never been the same man since our Annie went fra hame!"

And the tears streamed down her worn cheeks as she spoke, and her voice was broken.

"Don't fret, aunt," I said, gently. "I'm sure Annie is all right—indeed, you know from her own letter that no harm has come to her."

"I'm nawt fretting for Annie, it's for father!" was the reply. "I dawn't knaw what there be upon his mind, but he's tarrible changed; and what be warst, he won't speak o't even to *me;* but keeps it like a canker-warm, a-gnawing and eating out his life. I were watching him just naw, and I knaw'd well what were passing through 'un's mind."

"What?"

"First he saw thee dressed and smart, and he thought haw his Annie, too, would be sitting, ready for church o' Sundays; and then the bells sounded, and all the happy time cam' back upon poor father's heart. Oh, Hugh! if you and Annie had been different to one another, father would ha' been happy still; but I dawn't blame 'ee, lad—it were no fault o' yourn!"

But though she acquitted me in words, there was in her manner a certain affectionate reproach.

"Aunt," I said, "I would cut off my hand to put things right; but Annie never cared for me, and I—"

I paused awkwardly, knowing well that I had never loved my cousin.

"The Lawd will punish her!" cried my aunt, bitterly. "I'll ne'er forgie her! If she had stayed at hame like a decent lass, it would all ha' come right i' the end. But she went wi' scarce a ward, and wherever she be, the Lawd will punish her!"

"Nay, nay," I said, rising and putting my hand on my aunt's

shoulder, "don't be hard on poor Annie! She'll soon come back, and then all will be explained."

My aunt's manner changed again, and the tears streamed from her eyes anew.

"Oh, Hugh, my lad, think you our lassie will *ever* coom back?"

"Of course. 'Twas but a lass's whim for change; she'll soon tire and return. I'm sure no harm has happened to her, and she was always kind and loving."

"Saw she were, Hugh, saw she were! Hugh, will 'ee speak to father, and try to cheer 'un?"

I nodded, then stooping, I kissed my aunt on the cheek. The Sabbath bells still rang from the distance, clearly and sweetly. The sun looked in through the window, and a sunbeam trembled on the paven floor.

"Shall you gaw to church, lad?" asked my aunt, as I moved to the door.

"Not to-day," I replied. "I'm going for a walk on the moor."

She looked at me keenly, and I saw that she guessed my secret; for the truth was,, I was hoping and praying to meet with Madeline. With a heavy sigh, she turned away, and began removing the breakfast things.

Once outside, I breathed again. It was a calm, beautiful, sunny day, with just a touch of frost in the clear sparkling air. Far away the sea shone like silver.

I hesitated a moment, then walked down the road toward the lodge gate—toward the very spot where, years before, I had first met George Redruth. No one was about; a Sabbath stillness lay everywhere; and the faint sound of the far-off bells only rendered it deeper.

I paused at the gate, and looked up the avenue. There was no sign of any one. I longed to walk right up to the great house and inquire for her I sought; but I lacked the courage. What was I, a common overseer of the mine, to go following the footsteps of a proud lady? If I could meet her by accident, good and well: but I did not wish even her to suspect that I was so anxious for the meeting.

Perhaps she had gone on to church. If so, doubtless George Redruth was in her company. I fretted at the thought, and turned away. At last, weary with waiting, I determined to seek forgetfulness in a long walk across the moor, such as I had told my aunt I had intended to take.

Quitting the road, I followed a path which led right over the

open moorland in the direction of the sea. The air was full of lightness and sweetness; but my spirits by this time had sunk to freezing-point. As to forgetting the one object of my thought, that was simply impossible. My soul was full of one image, which went with me at every step I took.

I had wandered about a mile when I perceived, by the side of a lonely moorland tarn—one of those dark, turf-stained pools which cast back the light like polished ebony, and are often mysteriously deep—the figure of a man. He was sitting on a fragment of rock, and looking at the water.

Coming up quickly, I recognized my uncle.

Our eyes met, but he did not speak. Turning his head away, he looked down at the tarn.

"Why, uncle," I cried, "I thought you were at church?"

"Naw, lad," he answered, still with his head averted; "naw, lad, I were in naw mood for to kneel and pray. I came out yar on the waste land, and I sat down yar, a-thinking."

I put my hand upon his shoulder.

"Uncle, you're not angry? With *me*, I mean?"

"Naw, lad," he replied, in the same low, listless tones. "I ha' no call to be angry, least of all wi' thee. Don't 'ee mind *me*—gang your gait, and lea' me here alawn."

But I remembered my promise to my aunt, and was determined not to leave him so. So I sat down by his side, saying:

"You've no reason to take it so much to heart: it's *making* trouble, I think, before it comes. I know well why you're fretting yourself so much. It's about Annie; but, take my word for it, Annie's all right, and will soon come back home."

He turned his face toward mine. How strangely wild and weary it seemed, set in its iron-gray hair.

"Sometimes I think, lad, as she'll *never* coom back; and if she do, will she e'er again be the same little Annie I used to knaw? But it's nawt *that*, my lad, it's nawt *that* as is on my mind."

"Then what is it? Annie, I am sure, is well and happy: so what can it be?"

He looked at me long and steadfastly before he replied.

"If my lass went away, it mun ha' been because o' trouble; and if 'twere trouble, 'twere a kind that she were feared to tell even to her awn father. That letter my Annie writ came from a sore heart—maybe a heart some villain had broken; and what I think, lad, other folks think too—I ha' seen them whispering it to one anawther, and looking at *me!*"

Of course I understood him well enough; for the same thought had often enough been in my own mind.

"Whatever has happened," I said, "be sure of one thing—Annie is not to blame! Uncle, do you know what I have often suspected? My cousin left us only for a little while, because she wished to be out of George Redruth's way."

"What d'ye mean?" he cried, starting, and trembling violently.

"There was something between them. He had won her heart, perhaps. Then, distrusting him, and knowing the great distance between their stations, she said to herself, 'I will go away for a time till I am cured, or till *he* has left the place.'"

My uncle frowned thoughtfully, and shook his head.

"Naw, Hugh—there be more in 't than that; but, whate'er it be, I'm sure the young master had no hand in 't. I know you never liked 'un, Hugh; but Master Jarge has a kind heart, and would never do a dirty deed. Why, I ha' knawed him and sarved him ever sin' he were a boy, and I'd trust 'un wi' my own life."

In pity for his trouble, I forbore to tell him all I knew. Even had I done so, I believe his simple faith in the "master" would have remained firm.

"It's of summat else I'm thinking, lad," he said, after a pause; "summat that were tawld me t'other day by John Rudd. Three or four days arter Annie went away, John Rudd he saw her in Falmouth, alawng wi' that Yankee chap, Johnson, the overseer."

He noticed my start of surprise, and continued,

"They were standing talking together on the quay, and Annie were crying. Maybe there's summat in it, and maybe nawt; but sin' the night she went, overseer chap has been away—folk say, in London. Putting this and that tagether, Hugh, my lad, what do it all mean?"

I was as puzzled as himself; but I hastened to assure him of one thing—the utter impossibility of there being any intimate relationship between my cousin and the pseudo American. He looked somewhat incredulous, for in his simple eyes Johnson was a stylish and important person, very likely to find favor in the eyes of a young woman.

He rose wearily, and held out his hand.

"Lea' me to think it out, lad. My mind be fixed that summat's wrang, and I sha'n't sleep till I knaw the truth, the whole Gospel truth. I ha' been praying and praying that things be nawt as I ha' feared, for if any living man had played the villain wi' my

Annie, Lawd help him! Lawd keep him from the reach o' my hands!"

As I looked into his face, I could not help echoing the prayer. I felt certain, at the same time, that his fears and suspicions had shot greatly in excess of the truth. I knew that scandal was busy with poor Annie's name, and that much of the scandal must have reached his ears; but I could not yet bring myself to believe that Annie's flight betokened anything seriously wrong. Of one thing I felt, nevertheless, certain—that if wrong *had* been done, George Redruth was in some way responsible.

I stood and watched my uncle, as he wandered away in the direction of our home; then I turned my face again toward the sea, and wandered on. As I went, the moor grew opener and wilder, strewn with great stones and bowlders like fragments of the wreck of some past world; some huge as menhirs translated thither in some prehistoric period of wondrous floods—when the arid waste on which I trod was the oozy bottom of a troubled sea.

Here and there fed wild cattle, black and horned, like those that haunted the woods of Ancient Britain. In solitary places the buzzard hovered, and by the brink of lonely tarns the heron waded, rising up as I approached, with sleepy waft of wing.

At last, after a ramble of several miles, I approached the sea margin. My path was now on the stony edge of low-lying cliffs, at the base of which the waters thundered forever. Here I found a lonely promontory of black granite, stretching out into the sea, and whitened at its limits by the chalky droppings of innumerable sea-birds. On a rocky island a few yards from the extreme point of the promontory, sat a flock of cormorants; as I approached, they turned their snake-like necks, but did not rise.

The sun was warm and bright, the sea calm and shimmering like steel. I threw myself down on the rocks, and, with face upturned to the clear skies, closed my eyes. A large black-winged gull wheeled, screaming over me, and then sailed slowly away. All I heard was the low murmur of the billows breaking sadly on the rocks beneath me—that sound which "deepens silence," and has such solemn meanings for the troubled human soul.

Suddenly another sound broke upon my ear. I started, and listened. The sound seemed to come from the sea itself, and was like a mermaid singing. I rose quickly, and, crossing the rocks, walked in the direction from which the voice came.

Approaching the edge of the crags, I looked down, and saw beneath me, in the very shadow of the promontory, a quiet creek.

The rocks fell asunder, leaving a space of sandy beach, some twenty yards broad, and closed by the still waters of the sea, which broke in a thin fringe of white foam on a sunny slope of white pebble and golden sand.

It was a nook just such as the fable merwomen or sirens might have chosen when the world was haunted, and such fair creations brightened the sunshine. But what am I saying? It was haunted still, and by one far sweeter and more winsome than any mere creation of a poet's fancy!

Lying like a basking seal on the loose shingle just under the rocks, and looking up at me with sparkling eyes, was the colored girl from Demerara; and standing on the water's edge, with her face looking seaward, was Madeline Graham.

CHAPTER XVII.

A WALK ACROSS THE MOOR.

FULL of delight at the unexpected vision, I ran down the rocks, and soon leaped down upon the beach, close to the spot where Anita was lying. She uttered a merry cry in Spanish, which caused her mistress to look in my direction. Madeline exhibited no surprise, but after a momentary glance, continued her occupation, that of writing or drawing something on the sand with the point of her parasol.

I walked toward her, and greeted her by name. She smiled and nodded, but still continued intent upon the sand beneath her. I followed the direction of her eyes and to my astonishment read my own name, thus:

HUGH TRELAWNEY, ST. GURLOTT'S.

The hot blood rushed to my cheek; but fled again almost immediately, as I read close by the words:

GEORGE REDRUTH, ESQ.

Both the master's name and my own were printed large and bold. Close by them, smaller in size and in running writing, were the incomplete letters on which she was then busy—

MADELINE GR——

But no sooner had she reached the "r" than she glanced up at me, laughed merrily, and obliterated it all with her little, daintily booted foot.

"What brought you here, Mr. Trelawney?" she said. "I thought that you would have been at church."

"I thought the same of you," I replied, smiling.

"Then you did not follow us?"

"Certainly not; though had I known, I might very possibly have done so. But who could have dreamed of finding you in this solitary place, so far away from home?"

"My true home is far away indeed," she answered; and raising her hand, she pointed right out to sea. "Yonder! Sometimes I wish that, as the Scripture says, I had wings like a bird that I might fly back!"

And I saw that her beautiful eyes were dim with tears.

"Have you relations there?" I asked. "Or friends whom you love?"

"Neither friends nor relations. When my dear father died I was left quite solitary. But I lived so long there, and was so happy! And South America is so beautiful, so different from this dreary land!"

I watched her nervously.

"Some day, perhaps, you will return?"

"Perhaps, I can not tell," she replied, sadly, and turning on her heel, she walked slowly toward the spot where Anita was lying. The girl looked up and showed her white teeth, smiling; the smile broadened as her mistress spoke to her rapidly in Portuguese.

"Anita is of my opinion," said Madeline; "she thinks this English climate detestable, and she longs for the palms and temples of the West. I suppose I shall have to send her back. The people think her a wild savage, because she does not understand their barbarous dialect, and she will never settle in England."

I had my own suspicion that Madeline was laughing at me, and that Anita's smile had a quite different meaning; but I was too happy in the mere presence of my darling to trouble myself on that head. Merely to stand by her side and look into her face, and hear her musical voice, was joy sufficient: for never had she seemed more bright and beautiful. She wore a rich sealskin cloak, tightly fitting, and descending to her knees; a pretty sealskin hat to match; and the parasol she carried was more for use as a walking-stick than for a safeguard against the sun. The sea breeze had brought the color to her delicate cheek, and the dark eyes were unusually light and happy.

For the time being I forgot the social gulf between us, between her wealth and my poverty, and talked freely and unrestrainedly

of many things. The old constraint left me, I suppose to the improvement of my manners, for Madeline seemed to look at me and listen to me with unusual interest.

"And *you?*" she said, presently. "Shall you remain in this lonely Cornwall all your life?"

The question took me by surprise, and was difficult to answer.

"Who can tell?" I said. "I have often thought of trying my fortune across the ocean, but habit has kept me chained to a dull place and a cheerless occupation. Sometimes, do you know, Miss Graham, I think it is all fatality. It seems so strange, for example, that I should have been brought here at all, and that, even in so unlikely a place, we two should have been once more thrown together."

"It is fortunate for *me*, at any rate, that you became a Cornishman."

"How so?"

"Because otherwise, I might not have survived—to thank you for my life!"

Was it gratitude, or an even tenderer sentiment, that filled her eyes with such tender meaning, and after one long look, made her blush and turn her head away? I can not tell; but the look made my heart leap, while a new thrill of rapturous hope trembled through my veins. I glanced at Anita; she was basking again, with closed eyes. Carried beyond myself by the inspiration of the moment, I took my darling's hand.

"Miss Graham," I said; "Madeline—may I call you again by that dear name? ever since we parted, years ago, you have been the one memory of my life; and when we met again—"

I would have continued impetuously; but gently disengaging her hand, she cried,

"Anita! come, it is time to go home."

The girl seemed to understand, for she sprung to her feet and pointed eagerly up the rocks. For myself, I stood stupefied and ashamed; but turning again to me with a light smile, Madeline continued,

"Are you returning to the village, Mr. Trelawney? If so, let us walk together."

Something in her manner convinced me that I had better encroach no further, but make the best of my immediate chance of happiness. So I answered eagerly that I was at her service, and the next minute I was piloting her up the rocks. The way was trouble-

some, and she often needed and accepted the help of my hand, thrilling me through and through with her warm touch.

At last we left the rock-sown promontory behind us, and stepped out on the open heath. We two led the way, while Anita followed behind, so slowly that we were soon left practically alone.

"How came you to walk so far?" I inquired. "We are three or four miles, as the crow flies, from St. Gurlott's."

"Oh, I came out early, and the sunshine tempted me on. I did not think that we had wandered such a distance. Poor Anita will be tired out."

"And you?"

"Oh, *I* love a long walk!" she replied, gayly. "Even in Demerara I used to wander for hours and hours in the woods; and once I was nearly lost. Night came down suddenly, and I had to creep into the bole of a great tree; and I wasn't frightened, though I could hear the tiger-cats crying all around me; for the fire-flies made it almost as light as day. But poor papa nearly went out of his mind, and, after that, would never let me enter the woods alone."

"How did they find you?"

"By beating the woods. There were about a hundred coolies carrying torches, and making noise enough to wake the dead. At last, as they were passing, I popped out of my hiding-place, and cried, quite coolly, 'Here I am, papa!' He was terribly angry, but I was soon forgiven."

"It would be a hard heart," I murmured, tenderly, "that would not forgive *you* anything!"

She looked at me merrily, and shook her head.

"Ah, you don't know me! Poor papa, if he were alive, could tell you a different tale. I was always a spoiled child, Mr. Trelawney."

Thus lightly talking, and playing with the merest threads of conversation, to avoid touching themes of more dangerous interest, we walked across the moor. Though it was winter-tide, the air was very close and warm with sunlight, and Anita lagged more and more behind. At last we came in sight of the village, and paused by the side of the moorland tarn where I had parted with my uncle. My eyes were fixed earnestly on Madeline. Suddenly I saw her start and change color.

Following the glance of her eyes, I caught sight of a well-known figure approaching. It was George Redruth, elegantly dressed, and carrying a walking cane.

He came up rapidly, and I saw by the expression of his face that he was ill pleased. He glanced at me angrily and contemptuously, and then addressed his cousin.

"Where have you been?" he cried. "I have been looking for you everywhere. Do you know that it is three o'clock?"

"I did not know it was so late," replied Madeline, quietly. "Anita and I went wandering across the moor and down to the sea-side, where we found Mr. Trelawney."

He looked at me again, and I saw his brow blacken more and more.

"Lunch was served at half past one," he muttered, "and my mother has driven over to afternoon service. I won't trouble Trelawney any further. Take my arm, and let me see you home."

He spoke with the air of authority habitual with him. I was not surprised to see Madeline flush angrily, and decline the proffered arm.

"There is plenty of time for that," she exclaimed. "See! poor Anita is almost exhausted—it would be a charity to assist her: it is none to assist *me!*"

Indeed, Anita seemed dead beat. She was seated on a stone, about a hundred yards behind us, resting her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands. Redruth glanced toward her and shrugged his shoulders.

"I never go near niggers," he retorted; "can't stand them. Perhaps Trelawney is not so particular," he added, with an insufferable sneer.

Our eyes met, and a sharp retort was on my tongue, when Madeline broke in, with a touch of his own cutting manner:

"Anita is not what you so politely call her; and as for Mr. Trelawney, he is at least a gentleman, incapable of making coarse remarks, even at the expense of a social inferior."

This eulogium of myself seemed to afford George Redruth intense amusement. Possibly he thought the word "gentleman" had an odd sound applied to a person of my position. I flushed to the temples, but did not trust myself to make any observation. Without even looking at Redruth, I raised my hat to Madeline, and walked rapidly away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I RECEIVE MY CONGÉ.

ABSORBED as I was in my newly awakened love for Madeline, I failed to notice for some time the changes which were going on about us; but I was soon brought from dreamland by the attitude which the young master chose to take.

It soon became clear to me that his resentment, from whatever source it sprung, was leveled against me; and in a short time I discovered that the innocent cause of all these eruptions was Madeline herself.

George Redruth had made up his mind to woo Madeline Graham, and he honored me so far as to fear that my presence in St. Gurlott's might be the means of preventing him winning his cousin's hand. A marriage with Madeline would be advantageous to him, principally because his own position was becoming very insecure, he having gambled and bet away most of his fortune, and so being in danger of losing the position which her money would restore to him. Thus it was that he watched the growing friendship between myself and his cousin with ever-increasing anger; and finding he could not openly control her, he determined, I afterward learned, to gain his ends by treachery.

It was not these things, however, to which I was able at this time to give my entire thoughts; other and more painful matters occurred which for a time drove the young master from my mind.

At home things were going very badly with us. My uncle remained in the same desponding state, while every day fresh wrinkles appeared in my aunt's face—the tears were often wet upon her cheek. It seemed a sin for me to be happy while so much grief remained at home; and I sometimes felt inclined to go right away and not return till I could bring our lost one along with me.

I began to wonder, too, if my uncle could be right when he said that the new overseer had a hand in poor Annie's downfall. It was strange, but since the night of Annie's disappearance Johnson's face had not been seen in St. Gurlott's. I was pondering over a solution of all these mysteries when one day an event happened which threatened to bring matters to a climax indeed.

I had come up from the mine after a prolonged inspection of it, and stood at the entrance, blinded with tallow and droppings, when

suddenly I heard a wild sound of voices, and looking round I saw two men facing each other, and looking as if they were about to close in a deadly grip. One of the men was my uncle, the other was Johnson, the overseer.

At sight of the man whom he believed to be his bitterest foe, all my uncle's feebleness seemed to fall miraculously from him. He towered above the other, and raised his clinched fist as if to strike.

"You villain!" he cried, "You cowardly, treacherous villain! Tell me, what is my lass! Tell me, or, by the Lawd, I strike 'ee dead before me!"

In another moment the arm would have descended, for Johnson was paralyzed with fear; but I sprung forward and caught it with a cry. My uncle tried to wrench himself free.

"Let gaw, Hugh!" he cried, fiercely. "I told 'ee what I'd do if I met the villain, and I'll do 't. Look at 'un, the white-faced cur; he brought trouble to my lass! And now, while she's wanderin' about the earth in misery maybe, he cooms yar to laugh at what he's dawn!"

I still held him firmly; and Johnson, cur that he was, seeing that the danger was passed, recovered his presence of mind.

"Perhaps, now you're a little calmer," he said, "you'll tell me what you're raving about?"

"I will answer for him," I replied. "Where is Annie Pendragon?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and raised his brows.

"It seems to me you are all raving lunatics together. Why do you ask me these things? What do I know of the girl?"

"You are supposed to have enticed her from her home. You were seen with her in Falmouth, and you must know where she is."

"I don't know where she is. I met her in Falmouth, it's true, and spoke to her; but her being away from home was no concern of mine."

"It's a lie!" cried my uncle, fiercely; and again he tried to free himself from my grasp, but I held him firmly.

"It's no use," I said; "we sha'n't mend matters with him. We must find out by some other means whether or not he is speaking the truth."

The result of all this was a serious illness, which laid my uncle low, and for some weeks threatened his life. During this time Madeline came frequently to the cottage, accompanied by Anita, who carried little tempting things for the poor old man to eat. At

last the terrible time passed, and he rose from his bed—the feeble worn-out wreck of his old self.

From that day forth his intellect seemed shaken, but he clung with strange persistence to the one idea, that Johnson was in some way responsible for all that had taken place. I had my own reasons for refusing to share this belief; nevertheless, I saw the overseer again, and after the interview with him, I became more firmly convinced than ever that my uncle was wrong in his surmises. If Johnson had a hand in Annie's flight, he was not the real wrong-doer. I still suspected George Redruth, though as yet I had been unable to obtain absolute proof of his guilt.

Meantime, having seen my uncle on the high road to recovery, I was compelled once more to turn my attention to the mine, which grew every day more dangerous. I had spoken to the master of these dangers again and again, and he had taken no heed. So long as he was safe above ground it was nothing to him that the lives of the men who worked below were in daily jeopardy. Nevertheless, I knew that something must be done; I resolved to make one last appeal to him, and if that failed in its effect to communicate with the members of the company, who, conjointly with himself, owned the property. I had fully made up my mind to seek him at home, when I was spared the pains. He strolled down to the counting-house one morning in company with Johnson.

"Mr. Redruth," I said, approaching him, "I should like to speak a few words to you, sir."

He looked at me from head to foot with a cold supercilious sneer which sent my blood up to boiling heat, as he replied,

"Well, you can speak then—I am all attention."

I glanced at Johnson, but as that worthy made no attempt to go I proceeded.

"It's about the mine," I began, when he interrupted me.

"Oh, the mine!" he said, impatiently; "I think I have heard a good deal on this subject from you before?"

"You have, sir; and you have taken no heed; but the time has passed for all that—each day the danger grows, and now at any moment the sea may break in and every soul be killed!"

While I had been speaking, he had been engaged in lighting a cigar; when I had finished he removed the cigar from his mouth, puffed out a volume of smoke, which he watched ascend, and asked quietly,

"Do the men know of the danger which you say is theatening them?"

"Most assuredly they do!"

"And do they refuse to work?"

"No; where would be the use? If they left the mine they would be thrown out of employment, and then their families would starve. Better for them to hold their own lives in their hands than to expose their wives and children to such a fate!"

"Very good; then since by your own showing you are the only discontented spirit, it's time for you to go!"

The cool way in which he uttered these words fairly took away my breath.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Just what I say," he returned: "that from to-day you may consider yourself dismissed from the mine, and had better seek elsewhere for employment. If you are dissatisfied, other people are not. Mr. Johnson is quite contented with the state of affairs, and is willing to take your place."

Seeing that resistance would be useless, I accepted my *congé* with as good a grace as possible, but I was determined not to resign without freely speaking my mind, so I faced George Redruth firmly and said, placing my hand upon his arm just as he was turning away,

"I have been expecting this for a long time, and it has come. Well, so much the better. I warn you, however, that I shall do my duty, and let the company know the exact state of affairs."

He turned to Johnson, and I saw the two exchange a significant smile; then his face hardened as he replied, contemptuously,

"You will, of course, do as you please; only oblige me by getting out of my employment as quickly as possible."

"It will be a good riddance!" muttered Johnson, breaking in for the first time. "Trelawney has always been a croaker.'

The fellow's insolent leer provoked me more than his master's *sang-froid.*

"I'll croak to some tune," I cried, facing him, "if *you* presume to talk to *me!*"

"Presume, indeed!" he repeated, turning white with fear or malice. "'Tain't much presumption, I guess, to take down a young cock-o'-the-walk who puts on airs as if he was a gentleman. If Mr. George had listened to my advice he'd have got rid of you long ago!"

"Come along, Johnson," said Redruth; "he's not worth talking to."

But I clinched my fists and blocked the way. I suppose there

was something in my face which looked ugly, for the two men recoiled before me. Several of the miners, attracted by our high words, had now gathered, and were looking on in astonishment.

"I know well an honest man is not wanted here," I said. "I've known that for many a long day. Like master, like man. You, sir, want a scoundrel to do your dirty work; and here he is, ready made, to your hand—as mean and cowardly a scoundrel as ever drew breath!"

"Out of the way, you ruffian!" cried Redruth, lifting his cane.

But he knew better than to strike me; he knew that, if he had done so, I would have thrashed him within an inch of his life; and he knew too that not one man there would have raised a finger to protect him, though he was the master of the mine.

But the presence of the onlookers, I suppose, made his companion foolhardy; for stepping forward, livid with passion, he shook his fist in my face.

"Who are you calling a scoundrel?" he cried. "Do you know who I am? I'm overseer of this here mine, and you, you're a beggar, that's what you are! Why, darn you! I could eat you up and spit you out, and twenty more like you!"

He had proceeded thus far, garnishing his address with innumerable expletives, which will not bear transcription, when, without more parley, unable to resist the provocation of his close proximity, I quietly knocked him down.

As he fell, George Redruth sprung toward me, and struck at me with his cane; but I tore the cane from his hand, broke it into pieces, and flung it away.

"Take care, sir!" I said, "I may hurt you too, if you go too far."

He drew back trembling.

"You shall smart for this, Trelawney! Before the day is out you shall lie in jail!"

"You know where to find me," I answered; and then, without another word, I walked away.

It was not for hours afterward that I realized what I had done; and even then I am afraid I did not regret my hasty conduct. Young and rash, I did not fear to face the world, though the mine was my bread, and I had no other means of maintenance. As for Redruth's threat of invoking the law against me, nothing came of it. Doubtless, as his own sacred person had not suffered, he thought it best to hold his tongue.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NEW OVERSEER.

THE news of my dismissal from the mine was received by my aunt with infinite wailing. The poor soul, knowing that for some time past I had been the mainstay of the house, saw nothing before her but misery and starvation; indeed, she was for going straight to Redruth House and appealing to the master, but I checked her.

"Don't grieve, aunt," I said. "It will all be right, by and by. Say I am dismissed from the mine—what then? The mine isn't all the world. I shall get something, never fear."

But my aunt shook her head.

"It be like young folk to make light o' things. When you'm a bit awlder, Hugh, you'll see things as I do—trouble ahead. 'Tis vary easy to talk, but what is there in the village but the mine?"

"But I'm going up to London, aunt."

"To Lunnon! Lawd save the lad!—and what for should 'un gaw to Lunnon?"

"I am going up to see the company, and tell them what's going on at the mine. Keep your mind easy till I come back, aunt. 'Twill, maybe, all be right then."

But my aunt continued to cry quietly, and grieved as bitterly as if she knew of the dark clouds which were gathering above.

As for my uncle, he sat and listened, and made no remark whatever. I concluded he did not understand, so I made no attempt to trouble him at all.

There was no time to be lost, and as soon, therefore, as I had finished my task of comforting my aunt, I began to turn over in my mind what it would be best for me to do. I was as fully conscious of the gravity of the situation as my aunt herself, though I had thought fit to make light of it in order to lessen her pain. To be turned from the mine meant facing starvation—unless I could find a similar situation to the one I had lost; the only way to facilitate this being to see the company, who might consent to place me over some other mine. Besides, it was necessary that I should see them and plead the cause of the wretched creatures who daily faced death at George Redruth's command.

Having fully made up my mind that the journey must be taken, I resolved to start on the following morning, and began making my preparations accordingly.

During the years that I had been overseer of the mine my salary had not been large, but I had been able to put by a small sum weekly. My first care was to break into this, to put into my pocket-book sufficient for my journey and give a sum to my aunt.

"Don't be afraid to use it," I said; "there is more yet; and before it's all gone I'll have work, please God!"

My hopefulness, somehow, soon infected my aunt, and she set about putting my things together with a brighter face. She dried her tears, and talked quite cheerfully of my going.

"They do say," she said, "that everything's for the best, and may be 'tis saw naw, though us can't just see it. Mayhap you'll meet our Annie in London and bring her back to us, Hugh."

"It's more than likely," I returned. "Our black cloud won't last forever, the silver lining must be coming round."

When all was ready, I stepped down to the village to tell John Rudd to call for me on the morrow, when he was to start before daybreak. Having done my errand, I lit my pipe and strolled slowly back to the cottage.

It was a splendid night. All the earth, hardened by the keen touch of frost, was flooded by the brilliant moonrays; and the sky was thick with stars. All was so quiet and peaceful, I could hear the click clack of my footsteps on the frosty road.

My mind was sorely troubled, I walked up and down the road until my pipe was finished, then I knocked out the burned ashes upon the ground and turned to re-enter the cottage, when I started back with a half-suppressed cry. There, not very far from me, standing in the shadow of one of the laurel-bushes in Annie's garden, was the tall figure of a woman. She came quickly toward me, and laid her hand upon my arm.

"Madeline!" I murmured, for it was indeed she, dressed in her evening dress, with her mantle thrown lightly over her head and shoulders, and her dear face raised wistfully to mine.

"Mr. Trelawney," she said, quietly, "is it true that you have been dismissed from the mine?"

"Yes; it's quite true, Miss Graham."

"Oh, why will you not be as you were just now, and call me Madeline," she cried, passionately. "Why have all those years come and gone since we were children, and left us so far apart, Mr. Trelawney. Hugh, let us be children again! I was your help and solace once, let me be so to-night!"

She had spoken truly—why should a few years separate us?

Once before she had offered me her friendship and I had accepted it: why not accept it now? I took her hand and kissed it.

"You shall be the same to me now as you were then!" I answered, "you shall be my friend!"

I think she understood me. She made no reply, but for a moment she turned her head aside; when she looked at me again, she was as calm as the moonrays which lay all about her.

"Tell me what has happened," she said, "and what you are going to do."

"Very little has happened," I replied. "I have got the dismissal which I have all along expected, and I am going away."

"Mr. Trelawney, it was more than sympathy which brought me here to-night. I want to ask you a question."

"Yes?"

"If my cousin offers you the post again, will you take it?"

I saw in a moment what she meant: that she would intercede for me; that the fact of my being reinstated would give that villain George Redruth a stronger hold over her; so I answered, firmly,

"No; the situation will not be offered to me, and if it was, I should refuse it."

"Your uncle and aunt are dependent upon you, are they not?"

"Not entirely. My uncle is sufficiently recovered now to resume his work. For the last week he has been employed at the mouth of the mine. If my sins are not visited upon his head, and he is allowed to remain, they will do very well. As for myself, I am young and strong; there is no fear for me."

She made no answer; and I, looking at her, noticed, for the first time, how thinly she was clad.

"Madeline," I said, "you will get your death; let me take you back."

I drew the shawl closer about her shoulders, put her hand upon my arm, and led her away.

"Hugh," she said, presently, "you have not told me the cause of all this trouble. Why have you and my cousin disagreed so terribly?"

The very fact that he was her cousin sealed my lips.

"There is nothing," I said, "but what had best be kept between man and man."

"Then you absolutely refuse to make any concession?"

"I refuse to receive any favor from George Redruth."

"Or from *me?*"

"From you, Madeline?"

"Yes. I am rich, you know—very rich, and now that you are in trouble I might help you."

"No," I answered, quickly; "don't think of it. It is impossible."

"Impossible?" she replied; "the word friendship to you means nothing."

"It means that you may give me your sympathy. I am grateful for that, but I can not accept money from you."

I walked with her as far as the entrance to the grounds surrounding Redruth House, then I left her.

Her eyes were full of tears as she said good-bye, and her little hand clung to mine with a persistence which well-nigh unmanned me. I was too much beside myself to return to the cottage, so for about half a mile I followed the road which led to the mine. It was late, there was not a living soul abroad it seemed to me; yet, as I turned to retrace my steps, I came face to face with a man who had evidently been following close upon my heels. It was Johnson.

Madeline's softening influence was still upon me. Yet at sight of this evil face it seemed to fade, and there arose within me all that was worst in my soul. He paused, blocking my way, and sneeringly addressed me—

"I guess, young man," he said, "you'll get into worse trouble before you're done. Jest you let the governor see you as I saw you with Miss Graham to-night!"

The mention of her name by his foul lips roused me to frenzy.

"You scoundrel!" I cried, "mention that lady's name again and by Heaven I'll strike you dead where you stand!"

"Oh," he sneered, "killing's your game, is it? Repeat that to-morrow before witnesses, young man, and your doom's sealed."

He passed me by, and walked on toward the mine, while I, glad at heart to be safely away from him, walked with some speed toward home.

I found my aunt alone; I asked for my uncle.

"He be gone back to the mine, Hugh," she returned. "But dawn't 'ee sit up for 'un, lad. I dare say Jim Rivers'll bring 'un hame."

As I knew I should have to be ready to join John Rudd at five o'clock in the morning, I took my aunt's advice and went to bed; and so soundly did I sleep, that I heard nothing whatever of my uncle's return.

When I awoke it was still pitch dark. I struck a light, and

found that it was four o'clock. I therefore got up and began to prepare for my journey.

I went about my work as quietly as possible, hoping to disturb no one; but shortly after I entered the kitchen, my uncle appeared fully dressed for the day. He looked so white and strange that, for a moment, I was startled into the belief that something was the matter. As nothing seemed to have transpired, however, I concluded it was sorrow at parting with me.

My God, how the memory of that white wan face came back to me in after days! It was the memory of it, and of the patient, pitiful eyes, which sealed my lips when one word might have proved my salvation.

When John Rudd made his appearance, and my aunt came out of the bedroom, and began crying on my shoulder, I saw the wan, sad eyes of my uncle still fixed upon me. As I left the cottage, I looked back and found them gazing after me still.

CHAPTER XX.

IN LONDON.

On reaching London, I secured a room in a small coffee-house in Soho; and, having deposited my luggage, I started off at once to the offices of the mining company. It was three o'clock, and I counted I might just arrive before they closed.

I was astonished, on arriving at my destination, to find that the "offices" consisted only of a couple of grimy rooms in a side street off Chancery Lane. I was received by a dilapidated and somewhat dirty old clerk, who was crouched upon a high stool and scribbling away at a desk. He informed me that the head of the firm was at that moment in his room. I was taken to him, and made haste to state my case.

I soon found that my presence there was comparatively useless. Like master, like man, they say, and certainly George Redruth, in forming a company to conduct the mine, had been careful to select men whose views accorded with his own; besides, my character had preceded me; they had been forewarned of my visit, and to all my complaints they had nothing to say.

Sick at heart I left the place, and walked slowly back toward Charing Cross. What my next move would be I did not know. It was certain I could do nothing for the Cornish miners; and since

they could not starve, they must be left to trudge on with that grim skeleton Death forever by their side!

Pondering thus, I made my way slowly along the crowded streets, gazing abstractedly at the sea of faces surrounding me. It was Saturday afternoon, and the Strand was thronged. The hum of the busy crowd distracted me. I turned, intending to pass down one of the side streets and gain the Embankment, when suddenly I stepped face to face with a woman who was coming toward me, and uttered a cry.

It was my cousin Annie!

But so changed was she that I scarcely knew her. She was dressed as a lady, and looked like one; but her face was pale, her eyes looked troubled and sad. She must have been walking quickly, for as I turned to face her she almost fell into my arms.

The cry I gave attracted her; she looked into my face, and knew me.

She paused, uncertain what to do. My sudden appearance there, of all places on the earth, was so unexpected, that it completely unnerved her. For a moment she seemed about to fly; then, conquering herself, she stood her ground.

"Hugh!" she exclaimed. "*You* here!"

"Yes!" I answered, sternly enough. "I am here!"

I felt no joy in meeting her. Had she come to me poor, despised, with the taint of sin upon her, I should have taken her in my arms, and said, "You poor repentant child, come home;" but when she stood before me in her fine raiment, my heart hardened; for I thought of the heart-broken old people whom she had left.

My appearance must have been strange, for I began to attract some attention, when Annie took me by the arm and led me down the side-street I had intended to take. We passed on, never uttering a word, until we came to the Embankment. Then she let go my arm and spoke.

"Hugh!" she said, "did you come to London to look for me?"

"No. I came on other business, but I promised to seek you and take you back."

She was still white as death and trembling violently. As I uttered these words, she shook her head, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I can not go home, Hugh; not yet," she said, sadly.

"Not yet?" I repeated. "Will it ever be better for you than it is now?"

"Yes, Hugh; and soon, I hope, I shall be able to go and cause them no trouble."

I shrugged my shoulders and half turned away, when she laid her hand upon my arm again and said,

"Hugh, dear Hugh! you have never once taken my hand; you have not looked at me as you would have done some months ago. You think I have brought shame upon you all; but, indeed, it is not so bad as that—I am a lawful wife."

"A lawful wife? Whose wife?"

"Ah! do not ask me that. I can not tell you. But I am a wife; and some day, very soon, I shall be acknowledged. Hugh, will you not take my hand, and say that you forgive me?"

"I have nothng to forgive," I replied. "You did me no wrong; but you ruined the happiness of your home, and you have broken your father's heart."

"Hugh!"

"It is as well for you to hear it, Annie," I continued. "When your flight was discovered, your father bore it bravely, we thought; but it seems he hid the worst of his trouble from us, and pined in secret. It has been like a canker-worm gnawing at his heart; and now he is weak and feeble, like a weary, worn old man!"

I ceased, for Annie had turned away and was crying piteously. I went to her, and took her hand.

"Annie," I said, "tell me the name of the man who has been the author of all this trouble, and I will ask no more."

She shook her head.

"I can not tell you, Hugh. Why should you wish to know? I tell you I am his wife."

"If you are his wife, where is the need of all this secrecy?"

"There are reasons why he can not acknowledge me just now; therefore, I have made a solemn vow never to tell his name until he gives me permission. Is it not enough for you to know that I have not disgraced you, and that I am happy?"

She certainly did not *look* happy. Her pale, pained face, which was turned to mine, seemed to give the lie to every word she spoke.

"Will you tell them at home," she said, "that you found me well, and that they must not grieve; because some day soon I shall come back to them?"

"Where are you living now?" I asked.

"Close by here," she replied, quickly. "I was on my way home when I met you. Will you come with me, Hugh? I will show you the rooms."

I assented; and she led the way back toward the Strand. She walked quickly, and paused before a house in Craven Street. En-

tering with a latch key which she carried, she passed up a flight of stairs, and entered a room.

"This is where I live, Hugh," she said.

It was a change indeed from the Cornish kitchen in which she had lived all her life. The room was one which I could imagine Madeline occupying, but which was singularly out of place when coupled with Annie.

Having looked about me, I prepared to leave.

"Where are you going, Hugh?" she asked. "Home?"

"I don't know," I answered.

"Shall I see you again?"

"That I don't know. Since you say you are well cared for and happy, where is the use of troubling you? Some day, perhaps, when your sun begins to set, you'll find your way back to those who loved you long before this villain crossed your path."

I opened the door, stepped across the threshold, and—faced two strange men.

A hand was laid upon my shoulder, and a voice said,

"Stop, young man! We want you for *Murder!*"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE INQUEST.

For "Murder!" The very word paralyzed me; and I looked at the man in utter consternation.

"What do you mean?" I cried, recoiling. "Who are you?"

"I'll tell you all about that presently," replied the fellow, coolly. "In the first place, are you going to make a shindy, or are you coming along quietly?"

As he spoke, two policemen in uniform entered the room. He nodded to them; and, with the utmost *sangfroid*, felt in his pocket and drew out a pair of handcuffs.

"Oh, Hugh!" cried Annie, wildly. "What is it? What have you done?"

Without answering her, I looked wildly at the men; then, acting on a mad impulse and quite without reflection, I rushed to the door. In a moment the men threw themselves upon me, and there was a brief but fierce struggle; but my strength was of no avail, and in a couple of minutes I was overpowered and handcuffed.

The man in plain clothes, who had first addressed me, looked at me with a grim smile.

"You're a bold chap," he said; "but it's no use. You'd have done much better to have come along quietly. Now lookee here. I've got to tell you that, whatever you say, from this moment forward, will be used in evidence against you."

"For God's sake, explain!" I answered. "What does it all mean? *Who* is murdered?"

The man smiled again.

"Lord bless us, how innocent we are! You'll be telling us next that your name ain't Hugh Trelawney, late overseer of the St. Gurlott mine."

"Trelawney is my name, but—"

"Of course it is; and Trelawney's the name of the man we want—the name on this here warrant. My duty is to apprehend you for the murder of Mr. Ephraim S. Johnson, the new overseer, who took your place."

"Johnson!—murdered!" I cried. "It is impossible!"

"Oh, no, it ain't," returned the imperturbable official. "Deceased was found at the foot of the cliffs, with his brains knocked out, and bearing on his body signs of violence; worse than that, he'd been stabbed with a knife; and once more you're the party we want for having done the job."

Utterly amazed and horrified, I staggered and fell into a chair. As for Annie, she seemed completely petrified. I can see her white face *now*—frozen, tearless, aghast!

There was a pause of several minutes. Certain of his prisoner, the officer looked on quietly, and allowed me breathing time. Gradually, my brain cleared, and I became comparatively calm.

"I will go with you," I said, "but I am perfectly innocent. Until this moment, I never even heard of this horrible affair."

"Of course not," returned the officer, cheerfully. "That's what they all say, young man; and for the matter o' that, every man's innocent till the law proves him guilty."

"But I was not even *there*. I left St. Gurlott's two days ago."

"Exactly," was the dry retort; "you hooked it the very night of the murder. The body was found early on the morning of the 23d, and the warrant was issued yesterday."

As he spoke, I seemed to feel the net closing round me. At first the very accusation had seemed preposterous; *now*, I began to understand that my position was one of extreme peril. If Johnson had really been murdered, and on that night, as now seemed clear, I could not escape suspicion by a mere *alibi*. I remembered, with

a thrill of horror, my last meeting with the murdered man, just before my departure; and my heart sunk within me.

I knew my own innocence—but who was guilty? As I asked myself the question, I looked again at Annie, who was still watching me intently; and in a moment, as if by an inspiration, I thought of her father! Had John Pendragon, in a moment of madness, taken the life of the man whom he suspected of betraying his daughter? The thought was almost too horrible for belief—yet, alas! it was not unreasonable.

"Now, then, are you ready?" said the officer, placing his hand upon my shoulder.

I rose quietly. As I did so, Annie sprung toward me with outstretched hands.

"Hugh! dear Hugh! tell me you did not do it! I can not—can not believe that you are guilty!"

As I looked at her, all my spirit darkened and hardened against her.

"When the time comes," I said, solemnly, "may you be as well able to answer for your deeds as I shall answer for mine. The trouble began with *you*. If murder has been done, it is your doing also—remember that!"

They were cruel words, and afterward I bitterly regretted them; but I was thinking of her father, and remembering how bitter must be her blame, if, by any possibility, he had been driven into crime and violence as a consequence of her conduct. Whether she understood me or not, I can not tell; but, hiding her face in her hands, she sunk on a couch, hysterically sobbing.

What followed seemed more like an extraordinary dream than cruel waking reality! I was led from the house, placed in a cab, and driven away. That very afternoon I left London by train, and late that night was handed over, handcuffed and helpless, to the authorities of Falmouth Jail.

It is a truism, I know, that the best consolation to be found by the unjustly accused is the consciousness of their own innocence—a consciousness which is said to sweeten suffering, and lighten the weight of prison chains. My own experience is that innocence has no such effect on a man indicted for the foulest of human crimes. My first night in jail was, like many that followed it, a night of simple horror. Had I really been guilty, I could not have suffered a tithe of what I actually endured.

To begin with, the whole affair was so horrible, so unexpected; it was like the solid earth opening under my feet to destroy me and

swallow me up. By a strange fatality, Johnson had been killed on the very night of my departure, and at a time when I was known to bear the greatest hostility toward him. Remembering all I had read of men unjustly convicted, and even executed on circumstantial evidence, I thought with a shudder of how my very departure might be construed into evidence against me.

In the extremity of my position, one thought haunted me with tormenting cruelty. What would Madeline think, when she heard that I was accused of a crime so terrible, so cowardly? I could bear everything else but the fear that *her* heart might be turned against me.

My suspense did not last long. The very next day after my arrival at Falmouth Jail, I was taken from the prison, and placed in a dog-cart, with a policeman at my side and another on the seat beside the driver. An inquest on the body of the murdered man was to take place that day at St. Gurlott's; and, of course, my presence was necessary.

How vividly I remember that drive! Snow had fallen in the night, and the skies were dark and sunless; the whole prospect bitterly cold and desolate. We followed the same road that I had pursued long years before, in company with John Rudd! *Then* I was a lonely boy; *now* I was a melancholy man.

I wore a large ulster-coat, the folds of which covered the handcuffs on my hands; but I fancied that every soul we passed knew the truth—that I was a criminal accused of murder. Talk about the consciousness of innocence! I could have wept for shame.

What was a long day's journey for John Rudd's slow, old-fashioned wagon, with its innumerable stoppages for business, gossip, or refreshment, was a swift drive of five or six hours on this occasion. We started at six in the morning, and before mid-day were in sight of St. Gurlott's.

As we dashed through the village, I saw several of the miners hanging about; but I carefully averted my eyes from theirs. A little further on, we passed the door of the cottage where I had dwelt so happily and so long; and I saw, with a sigh of relief, that there was no sign of any one about. We trotted on, till we reached the gate of the avenue leading to Redruth House. Here, to my surprise, the horse was pulled up, while one of the men jumped down and threw open the gate.

We passed up the avenue at a slow trot, and, on arriving in front of Redruth House, found the front door wide open and a large number of people, both gentry and common people, flocking round

the doorsteps on the lawn. There was a murmur as I appeared. I looked round, but saw no face I knew.

"Now, then, get down!" said my companion; and I alighted. As I did so, some one pressed forward, and I met the honest eyes of John Rudd. The poor fellow thrust out his hand to seize mine; then finding that I was handcuffed, drew the hand hastily back and placed it on my shoulder.

"Dawn't be down-hearted, Master Hugh!" he cried. "There be not a sawl in St. Gurlott's believes 'ee killed 'un. So cheer up, lad; they'll soon set 'ee free."

I thanked him, with tears standing in my eyes, for his kindness touched me. Then I was led into the house, and in a little while was facing the coroner, in the great old-fashioned dining-hall, where the inquest was being held.

I forget many of the details of that miserable day. Only one thing I vividly remember—the sight of the dead man's body, stretched out for inspection in the kitchen. Why I was taken to see it I do not know; but I felt that I was closely watched as I bent over it. Poor Johnson! I freely forgave him all the trouble he had ever caused me, seeing the blood-stained and disfigured mass which had once been his living self!

As the inquest proceeded, I realized the full extent of my peril. Several of the men came forward (unwillingly enough, I am bound to say), and testified to my having quarreled with the murdered man and knocked him down. Then the young master, George Redruth, gave his testimony—to the effect that I had been dismissed from the overseership, and that I bore a violent grudge against the man who had supplanted me. Finally, it was proved that I had left St. Gurlott's some time on the very night of the murder, which was not discovered until the following morning.

Among the witnesses examined was my aunt. She looked utterly overcome with grief, and, on seeing me, would have sprung to and embraced me hysterically had she not been withheld. Her husband, it was shown, was too ill to attend; but as his evidence would have simply corroborated hers, his absence was deemed unimportant. All she had to say concerned merely my movements on the fatal night, and the coroner elicited from her the fact that as late as nine in the evening I had been in the neighborhood of the mine.

Vague and circumstantial as all the evidence was, it was sufficient to decide the jury against me. Dazed and horrified, I heard them bring in their verdict—a verdict of Willful Murder against "Hugh

Trelawney," who was straightway committed for trial at the next Assizes.

CHAPTER XXII.

MADELINE PROVES MY FRIEND.

AFTER the inquest was over, I was led into a small room fitted up as a library, still handcuffed and still attended by the two policemen who had brought me over. They gave me refreshment—biscuits, which I did not touch, and a glass of wine, which I drank off eagerly.

Ever since my arrival at the house, I had been looking eagerly for some sign of Madeline Graham; but she had not appeared. While I sat apart, however, George Redruth entered the room, and after glancing at me with (I thought) a certain compassion, addressed me.

"This is a bad business, Trelawney," he said, looking very pale and agitated.

I glanced at him, but made no reply.

"Let me tell you, however," he continued, "that ugly as the evidence looks against you, I hope that you'll succeed in proving your innocence at the trial. I haven't much cause to love you, and poor Johnson had still less; but upon my word, I believe you incapable of such a crime as this."

"Thank you, sir," I replied, trembling, for I could have borne his anger or indifference better than his sympathy. "You at least do me *that* justice!"

He nodded assent, and was about to say something more, when there was the rustle of a dress behind him, and with a quick start, and a sharp pain at the heart, I saw Madeline standing in the room. The sight of her was almost more than I could bear; I shook like a leaf, and my eyes filled with tears. The next moment she stepped forward with an eager cry of recognition, and both hands outreaching. Then, seeing that I was handcuffed, she uttered another cry—of grief and pain.

"Madeline!" cried her cousin, warningly; but she paid no attention. I had turned my head away, too ashamed to meet her gaze, but I felt, rather than saw, that she was gazing tenderly into my face.

When she spoke, her voice was broken and tearful.

"Mr. Trelawney! may I speak to you? May I tell you how my

heart aches and bleeds for you, in your great trouble? May I assure you how deeply I believe—as all who know you must believe—in your innocence of such a crime?"

I turned my head and looked at her; my head swam, and the tears so blinded me that I could not see her.

"God bless you for saying that!" I murmured; and as I spoke, she lifted my two bound hands, and held them gently in her own.

"I could not believe that any one would think it possible," she said. "I would have come before, but waited, expecting to see you set at liberty. But now I hear you are to be put upon your trial! Ah, do not fear! Have courage! Your innocence will be proved, and you will soon be a free man."

"Perhaps," I answered; "but whether or not, it is something to know that my innocence is believed in by *you!*"

"How could I doubt it? Dear Mr. Trelawney, I know you better even than you know yourself. No proof, however terrible, could shake my faith in one whom I know to be the bravest and best of men; one who is incapable of any baseness, one to whom, remember, I owe my life."

She turned to Redruth who was looking on, I thought, rather uneasily.

"And my cousin is equally certain that you are falsely accused. George, speak to him! Tell him!"

I looked at George Redruth: his brow was clouded, and his expression far less cordial than it had previously been.

"I have already told Trelawney what I think on the subject. Nevertheless, the evidence is ugly, as he is aware."

"But you *know* he is innocent!" cried Madeline.

"I *hope* so. Whoever took poor Johnson's life was a miserable and ruffianly coward, well deserving the gallows; and I can't fancy that Trelawney, in spite of his violent temper, is anything of the kind."

There was something in his manner, now, which aroused all the angry blood within me. His old superciliousness had returned, and the compassion in his eyes had changed to hard dislike and suspicion. I could not trust myself to answer him, but, turning to the police officers, who sat by, I cried—

"How long am I to remain here? Take me away! For God's sake take me away!"

"All right," replied one of them. "The trap's at the door."

I rose to my feet, and then, setting my lips firm to conquer my agitation, I turned again to Madeline.

"Don't mind *me*, Miss Graham. I shall come through this trouble right enough, perhaps; and, whatever happens, I sha'n't forget your goodness. I cared for no one's good opinion but yours. I'm not the first innocent man, by many, who has had to face an unjust accusation, and answer it with his life; and what you have said to me will give me courage, perhaps, to bear the sorrow that's to come!"

Before I realized what she was doing, she had taken my hands again, had raised them to her lips, and kissed them!

"Don't! don't!" I cried, half sobbing. "I can't bear it! Here, lads, take me away!"

"Use him kindly," she cried, weeping, and addressing the officers. "Remember, he is a gentleman, and falsely accused."

"Don't be afraid, my lady," said the man who had previously spoken. "*We*'ll look after him."

"And Mr. Trelawney—dear friend—do not think that, though we part now, I shall be idle. I am rich, remember, and whatever money can do for your defense shall be done by me. It is a poor return, indeed, for the life you gave me! Keep a good heart! Think that you have friends working for you, praying for you! Think that the happy time will soon come when you will be free again to return to those you love, who love you, and who will love you the better for a trouble bravely borne!"

In the rapture of that moment, I should have caught her in my arms, but I was helpless, and perhaps it was better so. Gently, but firmly, the officers led me from the room, and along the passage to the door, where the dog-cart was waiting. There was a crowd about the doorsteps and when I appeared there was a sympathetic murmur.

The officers pushed me through the groups, and I mounted to my seat in the trap. Then I heard a wild cry, and saw my aunt, who rushed forward, reaching up her hands to touch mine.

"Hugh, my poor Hugh!" she sobbed.

"Don't cry, aunt," I said, forcing a smile. "They don't hang innocent men in England. I shall soon come back home!"

At that there was a faint hurrah, led by John Rudd. Several rough fellows from the mine rushed forward, reaching out their horny hands in honest sympathy.

"Cheer up, Measter Hugh! None o' *us* believes you killed 'un! Cheer up! We'll ha' you back in St. Gurlott's soon."

"Iss, that we will!" echoed John Rudd.

The officer had now mounted beside me: and his companion, who was seated by the driver, cried in a loud voice:

"Clear the way there! Let go her head!"

The horse, freshened by rest and a feed, bounded off, and I left the group of sympathizers behind—my poor aunt, half fainting, supported by John Rudd. But on the doorstep under the porch stood two figures, on which my eyes were riveted till the last—George Redruth and Madeline Graham.

Madeline waved a white handkerchief. I could make no sign in return, but I watched her with streaming eyes till we entered the avenue, and the boughs of the leafless trees blotted her from my view.

Of that sad day's business, only one more vivid memory remains to me. Slight and trivial as the circumstance seemed at the time, I remembered it afterward with a wondering thrill.

Our way back, like our way coming, lay past the old cottage. Quitting the gates of the great house, and leaving the dark avenue behind us, we rattled swiftly along the country road. The horse, being homeward bound, whirled us along at full speed; indeed, as the poet has it,

"We seemed in running to devour the way."

As we approached the dear old cottage, I craned my neck round to look at it; the next moment we dashed past it; but in that moment I caught the glimpse of a ghastly white face looking out of one of the lower windows.

It was the face of my uncle, John Pendragon! As we passed, he seemed to give a wild start of recognition.

Then, looking back, I saw, before we were fifty yards away, a figure, wild and half dressed, running out across the garden to the gate, and looking after us. It was my uncle. He seemed dazed and stupefied. As we disappeared round a turning of the road, I fancied I caught the sound of a sharp cry, and simultaneously I saw him throw his two arms wildly up into the air!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRIAL.

It is not my intention to trouble the reader with chapters full of appeals *ad misericordiam*, or to pile up the agony in the manner of the expert manufacturer of sensational fiction; though, if I chose to do so, there is plenty of material ready to my hand. I

have my doubts, perhaps, whether I am personally interesting enough to sway the sympathy of the tender-hearted, in the character of a man unjustly accused of the most horrible of human crimes. But the mere fact that I survive to write these lines is proof positive of one thing—that I was not hanged! So, on that score at least, the reader may be perfectly easy in his mind.

The Assizes came on some six weeks after the date of the inquest, and in the interim I found that my darling did not fail to keep her word. A firm of solicitors, instructed by her, undertook my defense; and though I at first, out of my motives of pride, declined their good offices, I was finally persuaded to accept them. Though their managing clerk, I more than once received kindly messages from Madeline, but not once did she appear upon the scene personally until the day of the trial came, when, on entering the dock, I saw her sitting by George Redruth's side in the crowded court.

My aunt and uncle were there, too—the latter so worn and changed that I should scarcely have recognized him; so was honest John Rudd, together with other old friends and acquaintances. But before the trial began, all those who were called as witnesses withdrew, George Redruth among the number. My darling remained in her place, close to my counsel and solicitors, in the well beneath the judge's seat; and more than once, in the course of the proceedings, I saw her whisper words of instruction and suggestion to my defenders.

Thinking it all over again now, in the quiet of these after years, I am sure still, as I was sure then, that her face helped to save me. Its pathetic beauty and sympathy, I believe, touched the heart of the jury, and wrought wonders in my behalf. Even the judge, who had what is known as a "hanging" reputation, looked down upon her with eyes of favor.

Early in the course of the proceedings, I heard whispers among the crowd surrounding me. They were looking at Madeline, and some one was asking who she might be. A voice replied (how well I remember it, and how my pale face went red with proud surprise) that she was "the prisoner's sweetheart." Far away as I knew that idea to be from the simple truth, I looked at my darling with new feelings of love and gratitude, and almost forgot for a moment the great and impassable barrier between us.

After the speech for the prosecution, in which I was painted in vivid colors as a young man of violent habits, having a homicidal hatred to the murdered man, the first witnesses deponed to the find-

ing of the body and to the marks of violence upon it. Then George Redruth described my last quarrel with Johnson, and my dismissal from the overseership of the mine. On this occasion, I fear, Redruth rather exaggerated than underestimated the extent of my hostility; and when asked if he personally thought that the deceased had any reason to fear my violence, hesitated and answered that "he was afraid he had." I saw Madeline start and look appealingly at the witness, while a low murmur ran through the court. On the whole, Redruth's evidence, though given with a certain reluctance, was very hostile. I could not help feeling that it was none the less so because Madeline was seated there with my defenders, and working so zealously on my behalf.

My aunt next described my doings on the night of my departure from St. Gurlott's, and again admitted, as at the inquest, that I had been at a late hour in the neighborhood of the mine. Then my uncle entered the box. Ghastly and woe-begone, clad in his Sabbath clothes of black, he stood like a man dazed; not once turning his eyes in my direction. His evidence only corroborated that of my aunt; but unimportant as it was, he gave it with extreme reluctance.

After the prosecuting counsel was done with him, he was questioned by my own counsel, as follows:—

"On the night of the murder, you were at home with the prisoner?"

"Iss, sir."

"Did you see him go out?"

"I disremember. I took naw note o't; and ma memory's failing me."

"Ah; you have been ill for some time?"

"Nawt just myself like, sir."

"Had you any reason to imagine that the prisoner bore any animosity to the deceased? Did he ever in your hearing utter any threats against him?"

"Never, sir; nawt one ward."

"So far as you know, he had no cause to dislike deceased, beyond the fact that he had taken his place as overseer?"

I saw my uncle trembling violently; but his answer came clear and firm,

"Nawt as I knaws on, sir; and I knaw this, he ne'er meant to harm 'un."

"On the night in question, did the prisoner show any agitation?"

"Naw, sir; tho' he were a bit put out at gawing awa' fro' home."

"Did he show on his person any signs of violence, as of a struggle?"

"Naw, sir; nawt he."

"That will do. You may stand down."

Still carefully averting his eyes from mine, my uncle left the box.

All that could be said was said in my defense. My witnesses to character included John Rudd and other local worthies; but all this testimony would have been of little avail without that which followed. To my intense surprise, Madeline herself entered the box as a witness on my side; and though what she had to say was practically irrelevant, though it concerned chiefly my saving of her life from shipwreck, it worked wonders for me. Never shall I forget the thrill of joy that went through me as she said, in answer to a question:

"No one who knows the prisoner believes him capable of this or any crime. He is the bravest and truest man I have ever met."

It was at this point that the prosecuting counsel rose, and said, very suavely,

"Excuse me, Miss Graham—but you have a great interest in the prisoner?"

"A very great interest," replied Madeline, looking him calmly in the face.

"A *tender* interest, perhaps? Am I wrong in believing that there has been an engagement between you?"

I could have knocked the fellow down. Madeline went crimson, but recovering herself in a moment, steadily replied,

"That is not true. My engagement with Mr. Trelawney is one of gratitude, to the man who saved my life at the risk of his own."

The counsel lost something by this passage of arms, and I gained much. Madeline's reply was greeted with the approval of the entire court. For myself, I felt all my being flooded with a great joy, which carried me along in a fearless mood till the end of the proceedings. After my darling's tender proclamation of her belief in my innocence, I cared not what other man or woman in the world might believe me guilty; or, indeed, what became of my life. I was justified in her sight, that was enough.

After a trial which lasted only the greater part of one day, the judge summed up—sternly enough, I thought—and the jury retired to consider their verdict. Now, for the first time during the pro-

ceedings, I realized my position. My life hung in the balance, and a few minutes would decide whether I was to live or die.

The jury returned into the box, and the judge also reappeared in his place. The foreman stood up, and replied, in answer to the clerk of the court's question whether I was guilty or not guilty:

"We are agreed that there is not sufficient evidence to convict the prisoner."

"That is no verdict at all," cried the judge, sharply. "You must decide one way or another—guilty or not guilty."

For a moment the foreman seemed dubious, and, stooping to his companions, spoke to them in a whisper. Then he said,

"Not guilty, my lord."

I was acquitted, but the manner of the acquittal was cruel enough, leaving it clear that the moral presumption was against me, though the evidence was inadequate. I did not quite realize this at the time, but I had bitter cause to remember it afterward.

A little later, I was standing, a free man, in the parlor of a small inn, whither I had been led by John Rudd, and where I found my aunt and uncle waiting for me. I can not say that it was altogether a joyful meeting. The shadow of death seemed still upon us all. John Rudd alone was jubilant, and insisted on drinking healths all round. My uncle, usually an abstemious man, drank eagerly, but the drink, instead of cheering him, seemed to make him gloomier than ever.

It had been arranged that my aunt and uncle were to return in the wagon that evening with John Rudd, who had postponed the hour of his departure in order to await the result of the trial, and they urged me eagerly to accompany them. I was in no hurry, however, to hasten back to St. Gurlott's. My plans, as far as I was as yet able to shape them, were to leave England, perhaps working out my passage to the Colonies on some outward-bound vessel.

While we were sitting together, a waiting-girl beckoned me out; and following her into another room, I found Madeline waiting to speak to me. Directly our eyes met, she held out both her hands, and I took them eagerly in mine. Then, for the first time, my emotion mastered me; and, fairly sobbing, I almost sunk upon my knees before her.

"I was right, you see," she said, tenderly. "I knew they would never condemn you."

"I owe my life to you," I answered, in a voice choked with tears.

She smiled sweetly, and shook her head.

"Even if it were so, it is only doing as I have been done by; but

no one ever doubted your innocence from the first. And now, tell me, what are you going to do? Of course, you are returning to St. Gurlott's?"

"I can not tell. God help me, I can hardly realize it all yet! It will never be the same place to me again."

"Suppose," she said, looking at me thoughtfully, "suppose I could persuade my cousin to reinstate you as overseer of the mine."

"He would never do that," I replied; "and even were he willing, it would be impossible. It is like you, it is like your heavenly goodness to think of it; but it is out of the question. I think there is but one course for me to adopt, and that is—to leave England."

"You must not!" she cried, quickly. "For all our sakes! for mine!"

"For your sake?" I returned.

"Yes, surely."

"You—you would wish me to stay?"

She looked embarrassed, but almost instantly replied:

"Yes. I should not like to think that you had been driven away. St Gurlott's is your home—why should you quit it?"

I could not answer her. I could not speak to her again of my poverty, my want of foothold in the world. I could not remind her that all I cared for in England was her friendship and sweet companionship, which I knew, alas! could not long be mine. But as I looked into her face, and thought of the hopeless distance between us, there ran through my brain the words of the beautiful old song:—

"Altho' thou maun never be mine,
Altho' even hope is denied,
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing
Than aught in the world beside!"

After a little space she spoke again:

"Whether you return there or not, at least you will let me help you."

"Help me? Have you not done so—ah, far more than I deserve?"

"But I am rich, while you are poor."

"Not so poor as *that*," I answered, eagerly, "not so poor that I would take money even from your hand. Ah—do not ask me! To deny you anything gives me pain, but let me keep my independence—all that my ill fortune has left me in the world."

"Promise me at least one thing."

"Yes."

"Not to depart from England without letting me know—without seeing me again."

"I'll promise that freely. Then you—you will permit me to see you once more?"

She smiled her answer. After a few more words, she held out her hand and said "Good-bye." I walked with her to the inn door.

"My cousin is waiting for me in the market-place," she said. "He is going to drive me back to Redruth House."

As she spoke, George Redruth himself appeared, turning the corner of the street in a high dog-cart, driven by himself, and drawn by a pair of fine bays. He came up at a walk, and directly his eyes fell upon us, his face grew black as thunder.

He pulled up, while the groom sprung down and went to the horses' heads.

"I couldn't think where you'd got to!" he cried. "I have been waiting for the last hour."

"I came to speak to Mr. Trelawney," replied Madeline, quietly, "and to congratulate him on his acquittal."

"So it seems. Well, we've a long drive before us, and it's time we were off."

He did not even look at me until just as I had assisted Madeline to her place by his side, when our eyes met, and I saw in his face an expression of merciless jealousy and hate. I knew then that he was mad at my escape—that, in his cold dislike and distrust of me, he would gladly have witnessed my condemnation to a miserable death.

"Good-bye, Mr. Trelawney!" cried Madeline, grasping my hand again. "Good-by; and do not forget your promise."

A sharp cut of the whip started off the horses, and I had to draw back hastily to avoid the carriage wheels. As they drove away, I saw her turn to her companion and address him—I fancied, reproachfully. I stood dazed, watching them until they disappeared.

An hour or so later, my uncle and my aunt went away in the wagon, under the escort of John Rudd. I promised to follow them home in a day or two, and in the meantime to look about for some kind of employment. So I remained in Falmouth for several days.

What was I to do? The future was dark before me, and I was altogether at a loss how to act. My only practical knowledge, as a man of business, was connected with copper mining; beyond that, I knew nothing. However, I was fairly educated, and quite ready to turn my hand to anything. I searched the newspapers. Finding a clerkship vacant in a mine somewhere in South Wales, I

wrote in for it—only to find that my misfortune had preceded me, and that the owners refused to employ a man who had just been accused of murder. The same fate dogged me in every quarter. To my horror, I at last realized the fact that, although I was free, I had been acquitted under such circumstances as left undestroyed the black presumption of my guilt.

I saw no hope now, save in speedy departure from England. I would cross the seas under an assumed name, and begin a new life in a new world. A new life? Alas! every fine fiber of my nature was bound to the old life and the old land. In quitting England, I must quit Madeline, I must part forever with the only being who had made my wretched lot endurable, and whom I still dared to love with all the passion of my soul.

I was mooning one day on the sea-shore, close to the quay, when a hand was placed on my shoulder, and, looking up, I saw the kindly face of my old friend the carrier.

"Back again, John?" I said, taking his great hand in mine.

"Iss, Measter Hugh; I comed in late last night."

"How are all at home?"

"Middling, middling. The awld man be queer still, and folk say the trouble about Miss Annie ha' turned his head. But that's what I want to speak on. I ha' seen her—she be here, in Falmouth, Measter Hugh."

"*She?* Do you mean my cousin Annie?"

"Sartinly. I saw her last night wi' my awn two eyes, and I misdoubt she's in trouble."

Then the good fellow, with tears standing in his eyes, told me that late on the previous evening he had caught sight of my cousin in the poorest part of the town, close to the stables where he put up his horse. She was wretchedly attired and looked worn and ill, as if she had just risen from a bed of sickness. His first impulse was to speak to her; but finding that he was unseen and unrecognized, he chose rather to follow her; which he did, and tracked her to a poor lodging in a neighborhood of very doubtful reputation.

Remembering my last meeting with Annie, and how I had found her surrounded by all the indications of comfort and even luxury, I was stupefied. What had happened, and why had she come to Falmouth? On these points John Rudd could give me no information. All he could say was that he had seen her, and was quite certain of her identity.

My mind was, of course, made up at once. I would see my poor cousin, and, if possible, persuade her to return home in my company.

So I told John Rudd to lead the way, and we walked rapidly up the town till we found the neighborhood of which he had spoken. It was miserable indeed—a place of dark and fishy dens clustering close to the wharves; the streets narrow and liberally ornamented with drying clothes, suspended on lines stretched from house to house; the inhabitants unclean and ragged waterside characters of predatory habits.

It was one of a small row of houses in a lane facing the beach. John Rudd pointed it out, and I had hoped to approach unobserved; but as I neared the door, which stood wide open, I saw a white face gazing at me from the lower window, and I recognized my cousin.

The moment she saw me she started back and disappeared; but, with her name upon my lips, I ran into the house, and entered the room where she was standing, pale and terrified, as if eager to escape.

"Annie!" I cried.

She uttered a low cry, and, pressing her hand upon her heart, tottered as it about to fall; but, striding forward, I caught her in my arms.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER.

YES; it was Annie, though for a time I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own eyes. She was so white and thin, so poorly clad, and living in such a den. Truly her sun had set and, as I predicted, she was wending her way home. She cried out at sight of me, and, instead of giving me a welcome, she hid her face and moaned. I felt no animosity toward her now: whatever she had done, she had been bitterly punished. I took her in my arms and tried to comfort her.

"Annie," I said, "my poor Annie, tell me what has happened to you, that I find you like this?"

But she could not answer me for crying. Then she fell back, half fainting, in a chair.

We soon discovered the cause of her weakness—it was hunger. The poor thing had spent her last shilling, and had not eaten a crust since the morning; and, had we not found her, she would have spent that night starving in the streets. It was the work of a few moments for John Rudd to run out and return with some

bread and wine. We dipped the bread in the wine, and forced her to eat; and after a few mouthfuls, she revived a bit. The color came into her wan cheeks, and her eyes grew a bit brighter. I now had leisure to observe her more closely, and I was horrified to see that the clothing she wore was of the poorest; indeed, she was almost in rags, every available article having been pawned, as I soon learned, to keep her from absolute starvation.

When she came wholly to herself again, she looked at me fearfully—dreading lest I should question her again; and I thought it better to let my questions rest.

"Annie," I said, "do you feel strong enough to go now?"

"To go, Hugh?" she repeated.

"Yes; I must take you with me to my rooms. I can't leave you here!"

She was too ill to offer much resistance; so, after I had paid the few shillings that she was owing, we left that miserable den together—Annie, still faint and very weak, leaning heavily upon me. After he had brought in the bread and wine, John Rudd had quietly kept in the background, thinking that his presence might serve to further upset Annie. He now as unobtrusively took his departure, after having whispered in my ear that he would call for us in the morning. I took his hint, and determined to act upon it.

The night was very cold, and as we left the houses and passed down the street, facing the chilly wind, I felt Annie tremble violently, so I hurried her along and we soon reached the house where I had taken my rooms. Had I not crept into such good odor through my acquaintance with honest John Rudd, I should have been almost afraid to take poor Annie into the house; as it was, I expected a cold greeting; but to my amazement we were received with open arms. I afterward discovered that John Rudd had been before us, and had prepared the way for our coming. So when the door was opened the landlady, who was a good kind soul, came forward and almost took poor Annie in her arms, and led her, half-fainting, up to the little sitting-room.

I gave her my bedroom that night, and, rolling myself in a rug, lay down on the sofa in my little sitting-room and tried to sleep; but it was impossible, and after awhile I got up and began to walk about the room. Annie's room adjoined mine; so I could hear that she, too, was awake and crying bitterly. Once I thought of going in to her; then I refrained. It was better to let her ease her heart so; in the morning she would be more herself, and I could talk to her.

In the morning, however, matters were considerably worse: poor Annie was delirious. Her pale face was flushed, her eyes vacant, and she cried pitifully on some one to come to her.

At ten o'clock John Rudd's wagon stopped at the door; a few moments later honest John himself was before me. I took him to the bedside and showed him my poor cousin, and his eyes filled with tears as he looked at her. Then we both went back to the other room.

"Measter Hugh," said John, "what do 'ee mean to daw, sir?"

"I shall wait here till Annie gets better," I said; "then I shall persuade her to come home. You will be back again on Thursday, won't you?"

"Yes; and mayhap she'll be well enough by then to come. We'll make her a bed i' the awld wagon and take her careful, Measter Hugh!"

Never in my life had I thought so much of the honest-hearted carrier as now, when I saw him shedding tears for my poor cousin. I took his hand and grasped it warmly.

"God bless you!" I said.

He tuned his head away, and drew the back of his hand across his eyes; then he turned again to me.

"Measter Hugh," he said, "I dawnt mind tellin' you, 'cause you ain't like some as 'ud laugh at me. I'm a big rough fallow, and a bit stupid p'r'aps, but I've gawt a heart like the rest on us; and that dear lass found her way to it, and made me love her, as I can never love anybody in my life again. She don't knaw this any more than you did afore this minute. She never thought anything o' me, and I didn't blame her for it; for twarn't no fault o' hern; but I want on lovin' her all the same. I thought, Master Hugh, she might ha' married you; and if she had, and had ha' been happy —why, I should ha' been contented. But when she went away it a'most brawke my heart."

"It was a blow to all of us. God grant better times are in store."

"Measter Hugh, I ain't told you this to-day for the sake o' talking. I want you to unnerstand that if I can help her naw, when she wants help, 'tis all I ask for."

So saying, he opened his purse, took out a few sovereigns, and offered them to me; but I shook my head.

"I don't want it," I said. "I have still got some of my own left—when that is done, it will be time enough for me to come to you. Poor Annie shall be well looked after, be sure of that; and I

hope that by Thursday I shall have her well enough to take her home."

Looking rather crestfallen, he put the money back into his pocket, and turned to go.

"Very well, Measter Hugh," said he; "I'll come again on Thursday."

He had given me a warm hand-shake, and had got half-way down the stairs, when I called him back.

"If you are calling at the cottage," I said, "don't tell them anything of this. Don't let them know that Annie is here, or that you have seen her. It will be better to keep the secret yet."

If he could not induce me to take money, John Rudd determined to render assistance in some other way. About half an hour after he had left, a doctor arrived to see Annie; then came several bottles of wine, and some fruit; and I had strong reason to suspect that the landlady had not been quite so averse to accepting his money as I had been. At any rate, she was untiring in her attention to Annie, who rapidly recovered.

When John Rudd came on the Thursday, he found her sitting up in bed, able to recognize him and talk to him, but still too weak to walk into the adjoining room. Nothing was said about going away that day; but I judged that she would be able to make the attempt on the following Monday, the day of the carrier's return.

On the Sunday morning, therefore, when she had left her bedroom, and sat in the arm-chair by the sitting-room fire, I took her poor thin hand in mine, and said,

"Annie, my dear, do you feel strong enough to take a journey?"

For a moment she turned her frightened eyes on mine.

"A journey, Hugh?" she asked, faintly.

I saw her cheeks grow very white, but I knew that what I had to say must be said; so I went bravely on.

"John Rudd will be here to-morrow," I said, "and I want to take you home."

It was pitiful to see her face. "Oh, Hugh! I can't go!" she cried. "I can't face father, it would kill me! You go, and leave me—try to forget you have seen me, and they will never know."

I saw it was a hard task I had before me, but I tackled it as bravely as I could.

"Annie," I said, "the time has come when you must tell me the whole truth. When we met in London, you said you were a married woman. Was that true, or false?"

She shivered, and turned away her face.

"Don't ask me, Hugh! don't!"

But I persisted, and at last she replied:

"When I told you, I *thought* it was true. He said I was his wife. We went before a sort of lawyer together in Plymouth, and though I prayed sore to be wed in church, he said it was the same thing. Afterward, when we quarreled, he told me that the man was in his pay, and that it was no marriage at all. That was why I left him, and went out into the streets to starve."

"Now, answer me," I cried, "who is the man who deceived you? If he is living, he shall make amends!"

"Too late, too late!" she cried.

"What!" I exclaimed, startled by her tone, and thinking of the murdered man. "Is he dead?"

"No, Hugh; he is living!"

"His name? Tell me his name!"

"Hugh, dear, I can not—at least not yet. But I trusted him, and he deceived me. He made me swear to keep his secret for a time, saying that if folk knew of our marriage it would be his ruin. At last, when I could bear suspense no longer, he told me the truth. With the aid of him that's dead, he had deceived me!—our marriage was all a pretense! Oh, God help me! What shall I do? What shall I do?"

My head whirled; I had a sore struggle to collect my furious thoughts. At last I mastered myself, and cried,

"You must come home with me. You must tell the truth to those that love you. If not—"

She clung to me, looking up into my angry face.

"Hugh, you won't ask me! Promise me that!"

I did not answer her, I could not trust myself to answer. I was thinking of all the evil that had already happened, of the dead man, of the hand which, in a moment of madness, had laid him low. I was thinking, too, of Madeline.

At last I turned to my cousin.

"You must leave it all to me," I said. "Now go and lie down; I will call you early in the morning."

It was a wretched night for both of us. I walked about the sitting-room hour after hour, and listened to Annie's stifled sobs and moans from the adjoining chamber. In the morning I called her according to promise. She looked deathly pale, but tolerably composed, and when John Rudd knocked we were both ready to go. When we got to the wagon, we found that there was a nice bed

made up for Annie, and near to it was a basket full of things for her to eat.

I shall never forget that journey; to me it seemed interminable, but to poor Annie it ended overquickly, I fear. At starting, she took her place inside the wagon, upon the bed which John Rudd had made up for her, and there she stayed until the end. As we drew nearer and nearer to St. Gurlott's, her agitation increased terribly; and when at last John pulled up within a hundred yards of the cottage-gate, she began to cry pitifully, and beg to be taken away. I soothed her as well as I could, and, having left her in the van, I walked on to the cottage to prepare the way for her reception. I entered the gate, went softly up to the cottage, and looked in at the kitchen-window. It was quite dark outside; but inside the kitchen lights were burning, and a fire was blazing on the hearth. Before the fire, seated in his arm-chair, was my uncle. His face looked whiter than ever, his hair was like snow; on his knees he held the big family bible, which he was reading, tracing the lines with the forefinger of his right hand. I looked around the kitchen for another figure—that of my aunt. She was not there. I hastened back to the wagon, lifted out Annie, more dead than alive, poor child; and half-led, half-carried her to the kitchen-door.

"Go in, Annie," I whispered, "your father is there!" Then I opened the door, and, leaving her on the threshold, returned to my post of observation at the window to see what took place.

For a moment, Annie swerved and half-turned, as if about to fly; then she laid her hand upon the door and sobbed "Father!"

I saw my uncle start nervously and drop the book upon his knee; then he rose, and, with a piercing cry of joy, held forth his arms.

What followed I don't know. I rushed to the kitchen-door, and when I reached it I saw poor Annie lying half-fainting upon her father's breast.

CHAPTER XXV.

FATHER AND CHILD.

It was a sight to bring tears to the eyes of a strong man. The poor old father—white-haired, haggard, trembling like a leaf, and feverishly clasping the child who had been the darling of his days. He looked into her face—he smoothed back her hair with his wrinkled hand—he murmured her name—while, sobbing and moaning, she clung to him and entreated his forgiveness.

I stood looking on, almost terrified. As I did so, my aunt brushed past me, and, entering the kitchen, uttered a cry of surprise.

"Annie!"

The tone of her voice was harsh and cold, and her face was stern indeed.

Releasing herself from her father's embrace, my cousin turned to her mother with outstretched arms.

"Yes, mother! I have come back!"

But my aunt, with the same stern expression, repulsed her, and the poor girl fell back with a pitiful moan.

"Mother, mother, dear! won't you speak to me?"

"Bide a bit! Wha brought 'ee? Did you coom back alone?"

Annie turned her eyes pitifully toward me.

"We came home together," I said, stepping forward.

"Let me look at 'ee!" cried my aunt, suddenly approaching her daughter, who hid her face and sobbed. "What, can't 'ee look your mother in the face? Naw? then away wi' 'ee, for you'm na daughter o' mine!"

My uncle, who had sunk trembling into a chair, looked up, amazed, as she continued,

"Look at your father! Look at the shame and trouble you'm brought upon him! A year ago he were a happy man, and I were a happy woman; but *now*—look at us both *now!* Better to be dead and buried than to coom back yar, wi' thy shame upon 'ee, bringing sorrow and disgrace on folk that once held their heads up wi' the best!"

I was lost in amazement at my aunt's severity; for never for a moment had I anticipated such a reception. Hitherto, indeed, my uncle had seemed to take the affair most to heart, and it was *his* attitude toward Annie that I had most dreaded. But the parts of the two seemed reversed—my aunt was the stern man; my uncle, the gentle and forgiving woman.

"Come, come, aunt," I said. "You must not talk to Annie so. There has been trouble, no doubt; but it is all over now, and everything can be explained."

But my aunt was inflexible.

"Whar has she been all this while, tell me that? She left o' her awn free will, and she comes back o' her awn free will; but till I knaw what she ha' done, I'll ne'er sit down or break bread wi' her again."

"I told you how it would be!" cried Annie, addressing her

words to me, but still hiding her face. "Let me go! I wish I had never come!"

And she made a hurried movement toward the door, as if to fly.

Seeing this, my aunt relented a little; though her manner was still harsh enough.

At this moment, my uncle rose.

"Annie," he said, "dawn't heed mother. She dawn't mean it, my lass—she dawn't meat it! Whate'er you'm done, this is your home, and you are our child—our little lass." Then, turning to his wife, he added, "Speak to her, wife! speak kindly to her! May be she'll tell 'ee all her trouble."

His broken tones, so pleading and pitiful, melted the mother's heart. With a wild cry she sunk into a chair, the tears streaming down her face.

"Oh! Annie, Annie! may the Lord forgive 'ee for what you ha' done!"

Suddenly mastering herself, my cousin uncovered her face and looked at her mother. Then, drying her tears, and speaking with tremulous determination, she said,

"I know I have been wicked. I know I should never have gone away. But if you have suffered, so have I. I never meant to bring shame and trouble upon you or father; I loved you both too well for that. But if you can't forgive me, if your heart is still bitter against me (and God knows I don't blame you, for I deserve it all), I had better go away. I don't want to be a trouble or a burden. I have made my bed, I know, and I must lie upon it; and if I had not met my cousin Hugh I should never have come home."

"Tell me the truth, Annie Pendragon," said my aunt. "Wha took thee from home? Was it him as is lying, dead and murdered, in his grave?"

Annie opened her eyes in wonder. My uncle started, and then, curious to say, averted his face, but stood listening.

"What do you mean, mother?"

"What daw I mean?" echoed my aunt, sharply. "What should I mean, Annie Pendragon? Folk say you did leave St. Gurlott's wi' a man. Were that man him that is dead?"

"I have already asked her that question," I said; "and she denies it."

I saw my uncle start again. He was still eagerly listening.

"No, mother," said Annie, firmly.

"Naw? Ye were seen together i' Falmouth; all the folk think the overseer took 'ee away tro' home."

"Then it is not true."

My uncle turned; his face, which had been troubled before, now ghastly beyond measure.

"Annie, Annie, my lass!" he cried. "Dawn't deny it! Speak the truth, and we'll forgie 'ee! It were Measter Johnson wha brought thee to your trouble—say it were, Annie, say it were!"

His voice was pleading and full of entreaty. I alone, of all there, guessed why. But Annie shook her head sadly, as she replied,

"No, father. Him you speak of was nothing to me, and never harmed me by word or deed."

"John Rudd saw ye together i' Falmouth," cried my aunt; "and after that, the overseer were away for days. Why will 'ee lie to her that bore 'ee, Annie Pendragon?"

"I am not lying, mother. I am telling you the Gospel truth. Father, she *won't* believe me! But *you* will, won't you? God knows I would not deceive you, after what has passed!"

But my uncle had turned away, like a man mortally wounded, and leaning against the lintel oft he window, was looking wildly out.

"Dawn't speak to me!' he said, "Dawn't, my lass! I can't bear it!"

I thought it time to interfere; so gently taking Annie by the hand, I led her to my aunt, and made them shake hands and kiss each other. Thus some sort of reconcilement was established, and presently the two women, mother and daughter, went upstairs together. My hope was that, after that, recriminations would cease, and some sort of peace be established in the unhappy house.

Directly we were alone, my uncle turned and faced me. I saw that he was still greatly agitated, and fanced that I guessed the cause.

"Hugh, my lad," he said, "I know I can trust 'ee. Ever sin you was a little lad, you'm been a'most a son to me."

With the tears standing in my eyes, I wrung his hand. I pitied him, with my whole heart and soul; for indeed I loved him like a son.

"Hearken then, Hugh, my lad. Did you hear what poor Annie said about hersen and the overseer?"

I nodded; and he continued,

"Be it truth, think 'ee?"

"I think so—nay, I am certain."

"There were nawt between them?"

"Naught. Annie would never have looked at such a fellow. Lord forgive me for speaking so of one that's dead!"

He drew his hand across his brow, where the perspiration stood in beaded drops.

"I think you'm right, lad; I dawn't think my Annie would lie. But it has allays been on my mind, d'ye see, that Johnson 'ticed her fro' her home. God forgie me if I ha' been mista'en! More than once, lad, dreaming like, I ha' fancied—I ha' fancied—that overseer hissen confessed wi' his awn mouth that he were to blame; and only last night abed, dreaming like again, I thought I had my fingers at his throat—and tried to take 'un's life! I might ha' done it, I might ha' done it, if what I thought were true!"

As he spoke, he raised his voice to a cry, and a strange mad light, such as I had never seen there before, began to gather in his eyes.

Terrified at his words, I moved to the kitchen door, and closed it quickly.

"Hush! For God's sake, don't speak so loud! Some one may hear you!"

He was quiet in a moment. Subdued and gentle, he let me lead him to a chair. Then our eyes met, and though we exchanged no word, he saw that I guessed his secret, and groaning painfully, he buried his face in his two hands, and called on God to forgive him for his sins.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SHADOW IN THE HOUSE.

THUS it was that poor Annie returned to her home and was received once again as a member of the little circle at St. Gurlott's. But things were sadly changed for her, poor child; and sometimes as I watched her patient endurance my heart rose in revolt, and I blamed myself for having been the means of bringing her home again.

True, my uncle was glad to see her, and treated her with uniform kindness; indeed, he was never happy unless she was before him, and Annie, noting this, was untiring in her devotion to him. But with my aunt it was another matter. She, who was usually the kindest of women, now became a domestic tyrant, and practiced toward her daughter a species of cruelty which in another person she would have been the first to denounce. She never let poor Annie rest, but reproached her unceasingly about the troubles she had brought about, the change she had wrought in her poor father,

and the happiness of the little home; and she never failed to remind her that it was not until she had been deserted by her unknown lover that she had decided to return and administer consolation to those whose hearts she had broken.

All this Annie bore without a murmur. "It was only her due," she said; "her mother was right; she had destroyed all their happiness, and she should be made to suffer." Nevertheless, it was hard for her to bear, and I very often saw her with traces of tears upon her cheek.

But when people have poverty before them they can not afford to exaggerate sentimental troubles, and I soon came to the conclusion that the best way to help Annie was to help myself—to obtain a situation, in fact; and thus, by contributing a weekly allowance, to give things a big complexion at home. As all hope of obtaining employment in St. Gurlott's was out of the question, I turned my attention to other quarters. After many heart-rending disappointments and endless correspondence, I obtained a situation as overseer of a copper mine in Devon.

The situation was a suitable one in every way, and promised to be lucrative. I was to leave home and begin operations in a fortnight.

I was in the midst of my preparations, half happy in the thought of being able to inhabit a part of the globe where my misfortunes could not find me out, when I one day heard a piece of news which killed at one blow all my hopes of the future, and made my life mere Dead Sea fruit.

A report spread over the village that George Redruth was about to be married forthwith to Madeline Graham.

How or through whom the report originated, no one could tell; but its truth was admitted on every hand.

The news stunned me at first, then it drove me mad; wild, ungovernable jealousy took possession of me. I could do nothing, think of nothing now, save one thing—that the woman I loved beyond everything in this world was about to become the wife of another man, and that man my bitter enemy at heart.

It was impossible to conceal my secret any longer—they had but to look into my face and read it. When Annie heard the news, she cried bitterly; and I, blind as usual, believed she cried out of sympathy for me.

"It's a shame, Hugh!" she said, "after having made you love her, that she should wile away another man."

"Don't say a word against Miss Graham," I returned, "for she is an angel."

"Iss, hold your peace!" cried my aunt. "'Tis nawt to us, and why should you interfere? And, after all, 'tis better as it is. She could never have wed wi' Hugh: and no good comes o' young folk dangling after one another when they can never coom together."

There was sound sense in my aunt's words, though at the time, with the fiercest jealousy and hatred raging in my heart against the man who had supplanted me, I could not listen to them. A few days' reflection, however, brought me to a better state of mind—showed me that I was a fool, and that the news which had wrought such an astounding effect upon me was only what I might have expected, if a wild unwarrantable passion had not made me blind. For, after all, what was I to Madeline?

During my boyhood, I had dared to love her; but when we met again, I saw distinctly that the episode which had been all in all to me had passed completely from her mind. I had had the good fortune to save her life, and she, angel that she was, had been grateful; but now the debt had been repaid—in exchange for her life, she had helped to save mine. Having paid her debt, she had removed herself irrevocably from me.

As I thought of all this, I felt my heart grow hard, and I cursed God, who, in his beneficence, had sent me this one ray of blessing. But why had it come at all? Why had I been shown the light at all, if I was doomed to be cast into darkness again for the remainder of my life? With Madeline Graham by my side, I knew what my days might be; without her, I knew it would be better for me to be lying at the bottom of the sea.

I had mused thus walking up from the village one night, and now, standing at the cottage gate, I looked across the marshes toward the spot where so many months ago I had brought Madeline to shore.

As I gazed, my eyes grew dim, and the impulse came upon me to revisit once again the spot where my darling had set her foot; so I struck off across the waste toward the lonely shore.

It was a fine bright moonlight night, clear and still, though the shifting clouds in the sky predicted storm. I found the sea as calm as a mill-pond, fringed with white where the edges lapped the stones upon the shore. The moon was shining radiantly upon it; also upon the boat-house, which I looked at tenderly, remembering how I had carried Madeline there. Then I fell to thinking of her. I felt again as if her head were lying on my shoulder– her cold bare arms clinging about my neck; and I felt as though I would give half my life for such an experience again.

With a heavily drawn sigh I was about to move away, when a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and turning, I found myself face to face with Madeline herself!

Yes; there she stood, looking more like a spirit than a thing of flesh and blood—her face was so white, her eyes so sad. She was wrapped from head to foot in costly furs, while a black hood was thrown lightly over her head and tied under her chin.

At sight of her, all the blood rushed to my temples, and I felt my body trembling like a leaf; but I commanded myself sufficiently to speak.

"Madeline!" I said: "Miss Graham, you here at this hour?"

"Yes," she answered calmly, smiling a little: "it is a strange place to find me, is it not? But then you know, Mr. Trelawney, I am a strange creature. I may as well confess the truth. I followed you here to-night."

"You followed me?"

"Yes. After our dinner this evening, I came out with Anita, intending to pay you a visit at the cottage. When we came within sight of the gate, I saw you standing there. I paused a moment before stepping forward to speak to you, and you moved away, striking across the marshes toward the sea. I sent Anita back, and followed you here."

I was not altogether glad that she had done so. It was torture to be near her, to look at her, and to know that she had come straight from the caressing arms of another man. However, I commanded myself sufficiently to say,

"It is not right for you to be here, Miss Graham. Will you let me take you home?"

"You shall do so presently," she answered, not looking at me, but keeping her eyes fixed upon the sea. "Now I want to talk to you. Is it true you are going away?"

"Yes; it is quite true."

"Where are you going?"

"To the borders of Devon. I have obtained a good situation, and hope to make a position there which I could never have risen to here."

"And you will be glad to go," she continued—"to leave your home?"

"Yes," I replied; "I shall be glad to go. As to my home—why, I have no home now, all is so sorely changed. My uncle is so broken, I should hardly know him; my poor cousin, with her load of sorrow, sits in the house and shrinks from the sight of any

human soul. It will be all changed for me elsewhere. Perhaps I shall find happiness. God grant it! At any rate, there will never be happiness for me here again!"

"You talk very bitterly," continued Madeline. "Then you have no wish to stay?"

"Why should I wish to stay? A few days ago it would have been another matter. It is all changed now—all changed!"

"What do you mean, Mr. Trelawney?"

"I mean," I answered, utterly losing my self-control, "that through all these months of darkness and trouble, I have been sustained by one thought, one hope. Miss Graham, we are alone together to-night; there is no one but you to hear me. I may never see you again in this world, therefore I will say it. I love you. I have loved you all my life!"

She put up her hand and said, hurriedly, "Mr. Trelawney, please say no more!"

But it was too late, I took her hand and kissed it.

"I loved you," I continued, "in those far-off days when we were boy and girl together. Then years afterward the sea gave you back to my arms, and, God help me! the old passion was rekindled in my soul with ten times its original fire. Once I had looked again into your face, my darling, I had but one hope, one thought. I know I was a madman. I knew there was a gulf between us broader than the sea from which I snatched you, and yet, fool that I was, I lived in my paradise, and refused to see the pitfalls which were looming ahead. It was enough to know that I loved you, and that sometimes I was gladdened by a sight of your face."

I paused, and dropped her hand; she was crying.

"Miss Graham," I cried, "don't cry, for Heaven's sake! You have a right to hate me for what I have said."

She quickly brushed away her tears, and turned to me, smiling sadly.

"Don't say so, please. I honor and respect you more than I can say—more than I can confess, even to myself. I shall pray always for your welfare and happiness, and I shall never forget you as long as I live?"

"God bless you!" I murmured, kissing her hand again.

She drew it away hurriedly.

"Ah! don't do that," she murmured, "I ought rather to kneel to you—you, who are so much braver and better than I."

She walked away a little, and I stood for a moment pondering with my eyes upon the sea.

Suddenly I said, "Miss Graham, when are you to be married?" She started, hesitated for a moment, and then replied,

"I don't quite know. I am going up to London shortly. We are to be married there."

Every word she uttered seemed to stab me to the heart. Up to this I had clung to a wild hope that the reports I had heard might have had no foundation—now that hope was gone.

"Why," I asked desperately, "are you going to marry your cousin?"

She started again, and trembled slightly. "Why do people generally marry one another?" she answered. "Still, there is a very grave reason why this should be. My cousin is comparatively poor, while I am rich; he has grave difficulties before him which I can relieve if I am his wife."

"Did he put all this before you?"

"No; he does not even know that I am aware of it. Ah! Mr. Trelawney, we have all our troubles, and my poor aunt is breaking her heart over hers. Things have been going wrong ever since my uncle died."

"And you are to be sacrificed to set them right again?"

"Where does the sacrifice come in?"

"Did she ask you if you loved her son?"

"No! She asked me if there was any one else whom I wished to marry, and I answered her truthfully: I said there was not."

We walked back over the marshes, Madeline leaning lightly on my arm; but we never spoke a word. Having reached the road, we walked on toward Redruth House, and paused at the gate.

"Good-bye, Miss Graham!" I said, holding forth my hand.

"Good-bye!" she said.

"Yes," I returned, "I think it ought to be good-bye. In a week or ten days at most, I shall be leaving St. Gurlott's, and we may not meet again!"

Before I knew what she was doing, she had seized my hand and raised it to her lips.

"Good-bye, dear friend," she murmured, "and may God bless you!" then with a sob, she turned and was gone.

I stood petrified, watching in a dazed kind of wonder the figure as it moved up the moonlit avenue and disappeared amongst the trees; then, with a sigh, I turned away. Bitterly as I had suffered through

my love for Madeline, I did not for one moment wish that episode in my life had never been.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I PREPARE TO LEAVE ST. GURLOTT'S.

ALL this time, there had been a double shadow on my life; for not only was it darkened by my unfortunate and despairing passion but by anxiety for my uncle. I alone, of all who knew and loved him, guessed the true cause of the sorrow which made him,

> "As a tree inclineth weak and bare
> Under its unseen load of wintry air,"

bend lower and lower with a mysterious burden; so that, although not an old man, he had become prematurely infirm. He still went about his daily work in the mine, but feebly, mechanically, and very silently; but in the long evenings he sat brooding by the fireside, starting at the sound of a foot without or a knock at the door, but otherwise showing little or no interest in the affairs of life.

Poor Annie noticed the change, and, secretly reproaching herself as the cause, was ever watchful to attend his slightest wish, to answer his most careless look. Her mother's sternness pained her, after all, infinitely less than the sad endurance of one who had ever been the tenderest of fathers. And the change reflected herself in *her;* so that no one would have recognized, in the pale suffering woman, the happy, gentle girl who had once been the light of a humble home.

All this troubled me greatly, and made me naturally anxious to leave the scene of so much pain. Had I been able in any way to heal the wounds that misfortune had made, had I even been able to speak with a free heart of the trouble which, in one shape or another, was weighing upon us all, it might have been different; but I was utterly helpless. Combined with my great grief, came oftentimes a great dread—lest others should discover what was still an unspoken secret between my uncle and myself. So, in my despair of being of any service, I could not help counting the hours till the day came when I was to leave St. Gurlott's and repair to my new place in the adjoining county.

I was anxious, too, to get away from the district, where the engagement between Madeline Graham and George Redruth was a

matter of common gossip; where I was tormented, a dozen times a day, by rumors of what was going on up at the great house. After our farewell described in the last chapter, when my last hope left me and there was nothing for it save to resign myself to the inevitable, I saw nothing more of Madeline; but a day or two later I heard that she had gone, accompanied by Redruth and his mother, to London, and I knew, in some distant way, that the journey meant further preparations for the marriage. All this made me chafe and fret like a man in chains; eager to breathe other air, and to put solid earth between himself and his sources of torment.

I had lost Madeline forever, that was clear; indeed, I had never had any hope or chance of gaining her; but the dead, cold certainty of my loss was unendurable. If I was to live on, I must exercise all the powers of my manhood, and endeavor to forget what had been, at the best, only a foolish dream. So long as I remained in the neighborhood, haunted by so many sweet memories and troublous associations, forgetfulness was of course impossible.

The evening before the day fixed for my departure, the gloom in the little cottage was greater than ever. All our hearts were full. Although I was only going away a little distance, and although I had prromised to revisit my old home whenever an opportunity offered, it seemed like parting with the old life forever. Ever since I was a boy, I had dwelt there, with those good people, who had stood to me in the place of father and mother; my little world had been St. Gurlott's, my only home that humble cottage; and I should have been made of hard stuff indeed, if I had failed to feel the parting.

We sat together round the fire. I tried to assume a cheerful tone, and talked hopefully of the future; but it was no use. Eager as I was to get away, I was no voluntary exile. Where I had lived so long, I would have chosen to have lived and died.

My aunt, who was busily knitting some stockings to form part of my wardrobe, listened to my bold talk, and dolefully shook her head.

"'Tis well to ha' a light heart," she said, "and 'tis easy when one is young. But they tell me Gwendovey be a lawnsome place."

"Not a bit of it," I answered, laughing. "Not half so lonesome as St. Gurlott's."

"And it be so far—'tis bad as going across the sae."

At this I laughed again.

"Why, 'tis only seventy miles away as the crow flies! A man might gallop it on a good horse in a few short hours. Then, as to

the mine itself! It's different to being underground, and, what's worse, under salt water. It's open to the sky, and cheerful as sunshine—isn't it, uncle?"

My uncle who occupied his usual place by the ingle, looked round vacantly, and nodded.

"Iss, lad, that be true."

"Sunshine, did 'ee say?" said my aunt. "There'll be naw sunshine for me or father, when our lad be gone. I dawn't knaw what father will do with hissen, when you'm gone. You ha' been his right hand ever sin you was but a child; and now he be breaking like, he'll miss thee more and more. But I dawn't blame 'ee, lad! You'm right to seek your fortin'; and this be a poor place, Lord knows, for a bold lad like you!"

"Hugh will come back, mother," cried Annie, who stood behind her father's chair. "He is only going for awhile."

"Of course," I exclaimed. "Or, better still, I shall make my fortune, as you say, and you will come over and live with me."

"Too late for that," returned my aunt. "We be awld folk naw, and our time be nigh come. When he comes back, 'twill likely be to our buryin'."

"Nonsense, aunt!"

"I could ha' died content, Hugh, if I had seen 'ee a happy man, wi' childer at your knee," she said, glancing at Annie, and remembering the old plans—which had fallen long before, like a house of cards.

"I shall never marry," I replied, darkening, in spite of myself.

There was a long silence. My aunt's words had struck a painful chord, and we were all more or less uneasy. To break the spell of gloomy thought, I rose and gazed from the window. It was a fine night, with a full moon.

"We shall have fine weather," I said. "The wind has gone up into the north."

As I spoke, the kitchen door opened, and John Rudd entered, hat in hand. He greeted us all round, and, at my aunt's request, took a seat by the fire. After smiling silently for some minutes, he felt in his pockets, and produced some of his usual presents, brought that day from Falmouth.

"Gawin' away to-morrow, Measter Hugh?" he asked, presently.

"Yes, John. I start after breakfast."

"Dear, dear! A-harseback, Measter Hugh?"

"No; I am going to tramp it right across the moor. I shall take

it easy, you know; divide the journey into two days, and sleep one night on the way."

"It be a middlin' long walk, measter Folk tell me there be snaw out on the moor. I wish 'ee were going my way; I'd gie thee a lift, and welcome"

"Thank you, John," I said.

"Lawd, it do seem but yesterday sin you first rode, a little lad, in my awld cart. Do you remember, Measter Hugh, how I made a pome about missis and Annie here, and how you put 'un down in writing as fine as print?"

"Of course I do," I replied. "You don't write so much poetry now, John?"

John Rudd's face fell. He scratched his head somewhat lugubriously.

"My gift be failing me, I fear," he murmured; "but thar, pomes be for young folk, not for old chaps like John Rudd. Howsomever, it do come out o' me now and then, like sparks fra' a forge; but there be much on't I can't repeat, and much I disremember. 'Twere a relief to my feelin's like, Measter Hugh, when I had *you* handy to put 'un down!"

He added, spreading his great hands on his knees, and sinking his voice to a whisper:

"Did I ever tell 'ee the pooty pome I made about your son, when they took 'ee for killing the overseer?"

I saw my uncle start and change color, while the pipe that he had lit and was smoking almost dropped from his mouth.

"Never mind that now, John," I cried, quickly. "Talk of something else—something more pleasant."

"All right, Measter Hugh," returned the poet. "Shall I tell 'ee the news?"

I nodded: and he continued,

"Young master be coming home fro' Lunnun to-morrow wi' her he is to wed."

"How do you know that?" I cried, flushing to the temples, and conscious that all eyes were turned suddenly upon my face.

"I brought a big bawx to leave up at the house, Measter Hugh, and 'twere addressed to the young missus; and when I were up in the kitchen, and taking a glass o' ale wi' cook, they told me postman had brought a letter this arternoon, and that young measter were coming home. See?"

He little knew the torture he was causing me; but every word he uttered went through me like a knife. Again I made a device to

change the subject, and succeeded; but while the good fellow prattled on, my mind was full of the news that he had brought.

My original determination had been to leave home at ten or eleven in the forenoon, and, striking across the moorland, to do a leisurely forty miles before resting for the night; but I was now resolved to depart much earlier—indeed, at daybreak. I dreaded the torture of seeing my darling again; and I knew it to be extremely probable that she might arrive from Falmouth very early in the day.

After a parting glass of spirits, in which he pledged me heartily, and wished me all the good luck in the world, John rose to go away. I walked with him to the door, and across the garden to the gate.

Here we shook hands heartily.

"Keep an eye on the old man when I am gone," I said. "Gwendovey is not far away, but far enough if anything goes wrong. My uncle may want a friend. If anything happens, don't fail to send to me at once."

"I'll do that, Measter Hugh," replied John Rudd. "I be downright grieved to see the old mun saw broken down."

After another hearty hand-shake he walked away in the moonlight. I was turning to go in, when I felt a touch upon my arm. It was Annie, who had crept out after me, and now spoke in a low voice, almost a whisper:

"Hugh, dear Hugh, this is the last night we shall be together for many a long day. I wanted to speak to you before you go. I wanted to be quite sure that we are friends, in spite of all that has passed."

Her voice was broken with tears. Full of tenderness and pity for her, I put my arm around her, and kissed her on the forehead.

"More than friends, Annie," I said. "Brother and sister—as much as if we were so by blood."

"Oh, you are good, good!" she cried, resting her head on my shoulder. "Don't think I am ungrateful! Don't think I fail to see how kind you have been; how all your thought has been for others—never for yourself. But, Hugh, dear, you won't be angry if I speak of it!—it's on my mind, and I should like to say it to you before you go."

"What is it, Annie?"

"It's about Miss Graham! Ah, don't be angry! I wouldn't pain you for the world!"

"Do not speak of her!" I said, trembling.

"But you love her, Hugh, you love her—ah, do you think I have not seen?"

"Yes, Annie, I love her. What then? I learned long ago that my love was hopeless and foolish. She is far away from me as that star! I ought to have known it from the beginning."

She raised her eyes to my face, and looked at me earnestly and long. Then she said:

"Sometimes, Hugh, I have thought that you are wrong, for you are worthy of any lady in the land. Sometimes I have thought that, if you had only spoken, she would have listened to you. Why do you give her up? Perhaps there is time yet?"

"In a few days, Annie, she will be married to Mr. Redruth.

"Never, never," cried my cousin, with strange vehemence.

"Why, it is all arranged. They are engaged. Even if it were otherwise, where would be my chance? Great ladies do not marry beggars, little woman?"

"It is of that I wished to speak," persisted Annie. "I do not think those two will ever be man and wife."

"Why do you say that? Have you any reason?"

"Yes, Hugh. Do not ask me to say more now; but promise—promise me that you will not quite despair. For you care for her very much, do you not? and I—I know what you must feel, with such a love as yours."

As she spoke, the old suspicion came upon me. I bent down and gazed into her face, lit by the brilliant moonlight. Never had she looked so pretty.

"Annie," I said, "before I go, have you nothing more to say to me?"

"No, dear Hugh."

"I mean—about yourself."

How she trembled! I could feel the sudden leaping of her heart, as I proceeded:

"I have had my own thoughts all along, but I have kept them to myself. You know what I said to you long ago about George Redruth? Was I right or wrong?"

"Do not ask me now," she sobbed. "Some day, soon too, you shall know everything—but not now! not to-night!"

I saw her agony, and forbore to question her further. But we did not go in at once. Lingering at the gate, we talked of old times, of her father, of many things near to our hearts, but no more of the one thing that was nearest to mine. All my anger against her, all my indignation at the trouble she had wrought, died away in tender

brotherly sympathy and affection. She was my little cousin again, my confidante and friend. The peace of the still night fell upon us, touching our spirits with a beautiful consecration. Never shall I forget that gentle time of parting.

"Whatever happens," I said, as we turned to go in, "remember that I am your loving brother."

"Dear, dear Hugh!" she answered. "I have not loved you half enough. Ah, if I had trusted you at the first! But may be it is not too late, even now. God help me, I will try to make amends!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CHAMPION OF GWENDOVEY.

Soon after daybreak the next morning I took the road. All I carried was my staff and a small knapsack on my back; my other worldly possessions had gone on days before, by carrier. My aunt and Annie watched me from the door; my uncle walked with me through the village, and a short distance up the highway. He was in his working clothes, ready for his day's work in the mine.

Scarcely a word was spoken between us till I reached the point whence I meant to strike off across the open moor. Here I paused, and held out my hand; he gripped it in both of his, and looked into my face. He was never one of the crying sort, but I saw now that his eyes were dim.

"Hugh, my lad, I know you'm nawt going far away, but summat tells me as it may be a lang while afore we meet again. I ha' ever loved 'ee like my awn son. If aught happens to me, you'll be a son to the awld woman still?"

"Ay, that I will!"

"And Annie, poor lass—you'll be a brother to poor Annie?"

"Be sure of that," I answered. "But keep up a good heart. We shall all be together soon."

He gazed at me sorrowfully, with eyes in which there was no earthly hope.

"May be, lad, may be, but lookee. I be an awld man naw, and a'most done wi' life. There be summat here i' my heart, gnawing like, and I feel like that chap i' the Bible as were ate up by worms. But I mun wait and bear, wait and bear, only promise me again, lad, to look arter the awld woman and our little lass."

I promised with all my heart. He still gripped my hand, and

seemed about to say more, but with a moan, he blessed me and turned away. Greatly moved and troubled, I left him, and walked away across the open moor.

The day was bright and still; one of those calm days early in the year, when the chill of winter is still about the dark bones of the earth, but when there are quickening motions in the air, and mesmeric admonitions of a vernal resurrection. The dew sparkled upon the heath, and strung its silver threads upon the bare branches of gorse and broom. A lark was rising from the ground and singing heavenward, as if it were spring indeed.

Following a thin sheep-track, I was soon out upon the wild moor. Turning at last, I saw St. Gurlott's reddening in the sun-rays, while away beyond glimmered the sparkling expanse of the sea. My heart swelled within me, with love for the dear old place. I might have been a pilgrim to the Antipodes, instead of a man merely journeying to the next county. But in this world of ours, distance is measured by sympathy, not by mileage; and never having been much of a wanderer, I was inexperienced enough to undergo the pangs of exile—though the place of my banishment was to be only the adjoining parish.

With a sigh of farewell to St. Gurlott's, I turned and faced the track again. Around me on every side the moor stretched like a sea, flat for the most part, but here and there rising to rocky knolls, or descending into green hollows, where the sward was damp and spongy under foot. From time to time I passed a lonely moorsman, cutting turf or gathering furze for fuel, with whom I would exchange greetings and stand talking a few minutes before wandering on. But for the most part the place was solitary, haunted only by stray sheep and wild cattle. Hawks and ravens were numerous, for it was their happy hunting-ground. Trouble had made me a little superstitious, and I eyed these birds, especially the black croaking fellows and their kindred vagabonds the hooded crows, with little favor.

As I went on, the prospect grew wilder. Tall blocks and tons of granite were scattered everywhere, like the fragments of some submerged world; and, indeed, I knew well that the ground whereon I walked had once been the bottom of the sea, and that the mighty stones had been washed by mightier waves, and deposited there long ere the coming of man. Mile after mile, far as eye could behold, stretched the stony blocks—some tall and huge, monoliths, penciled over by green moss and gray lichens; some flat and recumbent, like mighty tombstones—as indeed they were. Verily, it was Tadmor

of the wilderness; broken up confusedly, as if an earthquake had just passed.

But though the scene was wild and bleak below, the sky was calm above it, calm and flecked with delicate filmy clouds that stretched gently over the brilliant blue of the far-off ether. Had my heart been less sad, I should have exulted in the beauty and wonder of the scene. Even as it was, I drank in the keen moorland air with a quickening sense of life. Gradually, the dark shadows flitted from my brain, and the strength of my manhood returning upon me, I passed on rapidly across the waste.

More than once in my passage, I struck the road again, and found myself among moorland villages and pasturages, with intervals of leafless woods. At mid-day I halted at a farm-house, situated many miles from human habitation and surrounded by pastures watered by a wild moorland stream. As I approached the door, a troop of wild shepherd-dogs surrounded me, so savage that I had to beat them off with my staff; but the simple folk welcomed me with true pastoral hospitality, and regaled me royally with scones and milk. The coming of a stranger was an event in their lonely lives, and they had a hundred questions to ask concerning myself, my destination, and the unknown region whither I was bound.

The sun was setting when I sighted Torborne, the inland village where I had arranged to sleep, which was close on fifty miles from my old home by the sea. It was a mining settlement, and as I approached I found myself abreast of a rough tram-road communicating with the mines. A busy sound of clattering and clanking, clashing and rushing, broke upon my ear; great wheels suddenly appeared, revolving in the air above my head, together with a lofty chimney, skeleton platforms, and iron chains clanking over iron pulleys. Flocks of women and children soon appeared, busy on the surface. Close by them ran a brawling stream, copper-colored by the refuse of the mine.

They greeted me merrily, as I paused to look at them. I noticed that they spoke a dialect somewhat different from that of the district where I had lived so long.

I slept at Torborne, and at daybreak next morning proceeded on my way. Soon after midday, I reached my destination, another mining settlement on the very borders of two counties, Cornwall and Devon. I found it to be, as rumor had informed me, a "lonesome" place, situated on the banks of a small river, and surrounded on every side by the wild blocks and tors of the moor. The mines

on which I had been engaged belonged to Lord ——, who had a residential castle close by, and whose representative, a solicitor, resided in the village. I reported myself in due course, and was forthwith installed in my position.

Before the day was out, I quite understood the motives which led to the engagement of a man with a "rift" in his character. The miners were a wild, godless lot, and the last overseer, an elderly man, had more than once gone in danger of his life. As a person still suspected of violent proclivities, I had been chosen to take his place. The truth was, the place bore the worst of names, and few men would have accepted the situation, at any price.

The agent, during our first interview, hinted that the miners needed an iron hand to rule them; and I was rather glad than otherwise of the information, for I wanted work, the more desperate the better. That very afternoon I inspected the place, and found myself inspected in turn by as villainous a set of faces as I had ever encountered. There was much muttering and murmuring, for the fellows wanted to be under the direction of one of their own number, one Michael Looe, a red-haired giant, who had this one advantage over his comrades—that he could read and write.

The very next day, the first after my installation, I found out the sort of opposition with which I had to reckon. As I stood by the open mine, giving some directions, that same Looe ran up against me, with a pickax on his shoulder, and almost capsized me. A hoarse laugh greeted this performance.

"Can't 'ee look where you'm gaun, measter?" cried the fellow, grinning savagely, to the huge delight of the throng—men, women, and children.

I looked him steadily in the face, as one looks in the eye of a furious bull. What I saw there did not daunt me. The fellow was a bully, and I had dealt with bullies before. If I was to retain any authority in the place, I must bring him to his senses.

"What's your name?" I said, quietly.

"My name?" he repeated, leering round at the others. "Mike Looe, if you maun knaw. As good a name as yourn, I'll wager."

Another laugh greeted this touch of primitive humor.

"My name is Hugh Trelawney; and, as I am master here, I'll trouble you to remember it. If you don't, my man, I'll find a way to impress it on your memory."

"You will, will 'ee?" said the giant. "And so you be measter? Mates," he added, looking round, "d'ye hear 'un? Take off

your hats to 'un! This fine gentry pup be measter i' the mine. Take off your hats to 'un, I say!"

And suiting the action to the word, he bowed mockingly before me. My blood was now up, and I faced him resolutely. "Go back to your work," I said. "No more words. Do as I bid you."

His manner changed from mockery to savage determination.

"Who'll make me?" he said, brandishing his pickaxe.

Before he knew what I was about, I wrenched the weapon from his hand, and flung it on the ground. He clinched his fist and made a rush at me. I waited for him, and landed him a blow which made him stagger back, dazed. The men flocked round us, murmuring and threatening.

But Michael Looe had confidence in his own prowess. He weighed fifteen stone, and had the fists of Anak; so that I, though a tall strong man, looked no match for such a giant. He uttered a fierce oath, and bade the men stand back.

"Fair play, lads!" he cried, grinning again. "Lea' the new chap to me. Don't 'ee see he means fightin'?"

With that the men made a ring, while their champion stripped off his waistcoat and began quietly turning up his sleeves, showing an arm with muscles like iron bands. For a moment I shrunk back, not that I feared the ruffian, but because I felt ashamed to take part in such a brawl.

The men saw my hesitation, and uttered a derisive cry.

"Look at 'un! He be afeer'd! Hit 'un in the 'ee!"

At this juncture, an old man, one of their number, but superior in manner to the rest, whispered in my ear,

"You'd best bolt, measter. He'll smash 'ee like an egg, as he did chap afore 'ee!"

My answer was decisive. Off went my coat, down went my hat on the ground, and, clinching my fists, I faced the giant. This rather turned the tide of feeling in my favor; at any rate, it elicited a feeble cheer. The men prepared themselves for enjoyment; a real stand-up "fight" was imminent.

Were I acquainted with the beautiful vocabulary of the ring, I might compose a prose poem on this episode; but alas! I am as one uninstructed, and, after all, it is too absurd. Annoying as the affair was at the time, I laugh at it now.

Mike Looe came at me like Goliath, but at the first encounter I discovered that he had no science. I myself had a little, and though far his inferior in weight, possessed muscles and sinews of steel, due to my healthy life and constant exercise, from boyhood

upward, in the open air. The result is easily predicted. In matters of fistiana, science, combined with pluck, is everything. Before many minutes had passed, Michael Looe had received as sound a thrashing as man could desire. He lay on the ground, his head supported on the knee of one of his comrades, and looking stupidly up into my face.

I turned to the men, with as much good humor as I could assume under the ornaments of a black eye and a bleeding forehead, whereon my opponent's fist had descended with the force of a steam ram.

"Well, my lads," I cried, "you see I've paid my footing. If any of you think I haven't paid enough, let him stand up, and I'll give him a little more."

This speech, quite in the humorous manner of my late opponent, completed my victory. It was greeted with an uproarious laugh and a cheer. To my astonishment, the men crowded round me, and began shaking hands. Then Mike Looe, rising slowly, approached me, and held out his enormous fist.

"Shake hands, measter," he said. "If you can lick *me*, you can lick any two o' 'un. Eh, Lord, but you knaws how to feet, don't 'un, mates? Gi'e me yur hand. You may sack me to-neet and willing, but I'll go bail you'm the right sort to be measter here!"

So we shook hands, and from that moment my physical supremacy was undisputed. Instead of dismissing my late opponent, as he anticipated, I kept him in his place, and he afterward became my right-hand man. I had made a very good beginning. After that day, I had very little trouble in retaining my due authority as overseer of the Gwendovey Mine.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A NEW SURPRISE.

My life at Gwendovey was quiet and uneventful enough. I found a decent lodging in the house of one Mark Drew—the elderly man who had advised me, in a friendly way, to run for it, just when I was about to tackle the champion of the mine. It was a white-washed cottage on the skirts of the moor, and sufficiently removed from the noise and bustle of the mine itself. I had a bedroom and a small parlor, so that when I had got around me my small stock of worldly goods, including a few books, I was tolera-

bly comfortable, and as contented—well, as contented as one crossed in love can be.

A fortnight passed away. Short as was the time, it seemed an age to me, hungering as I was for some news from home. I had received one letter, written by Annie, in which she told me that no change had taken place since my departure, but made no mention whatever of Madeline Graham or George Redruth. To this I had replied in as cheerful a strain as possible, but shamefacedly keeping silence on the subject nearerst to my heart. I was full, therefore, of secret anxiety.

As for the chance of any stray rumor reaching me concerning changes at St. Gurlott's, it was fully as remote as if I had been a dweller on the other side of the earth. The village where I dwelt resembled an island surrounded by an unnavigable sea; and the people in it knew as much or more of Kamtchatka as they knew of St. Gurlott's. From generation to generation, they dwelt apart: troglodytes of the mine, they knew of nothing beyond it. Very few among them had ever beheld the sea, though its nearest point of coast was under forty miles distant.

The place contained a church and a school house, the former a sort of chapel of ease of the Rev. William Stephenson, known as "Billy" Stephenson, the famous "hunting parson;" the latter superintended by a school-mistress about one degree removed above the ignorance of the children she taught, or was supposed to teach.

"Billy" Stephenson or his deputy preached a sermon every Sunday, generally a short one, and conventional in its news of both this world and another; but the reverend gentleman was most welcomed when he rode over on week-day business, marrying, burying, or visiting the sick, and when his conversation was secular, not to say horsy, in character. Ever top-booted, spurred, and ready for a gallop after the fox or the wild red-deer, and ever ready to exchange a coarse joke or repartee with the meanest of his parishioners, he was highly popular, through it is needless to say that he did little or nothing, shining light though he was, to scatter the mental darkness of his savage flock.

One Sunday, the second after my arrival, as I was preparing to go and hear this worthy preach (having just seen him pass by at a trot, riding in the direction of the old church) I was astonished to see a light country cart draw up at the door, containing John Rudd and my cousin Annie. Startled, and fearing some bad news, I stepped out to greet them, and learned that they had driven over

from Barmouth, a town some twenty miles distant, where they had arrived in the carrier's wagon on the previous night.

I assisted Annie down, and saw that she was very pale and trembled. Then while John Rudd drove, away to the beer-house, where he was to put up the horse, I led my cousin into the cottage.

Directly we were alone, she burst into tears.

"Something has happened," I cried. "Speak, Annie! don't keep me in suspense! Is anything wrong at home?"

My fear was that some evil had befallen my poor uncle, but I was immediately reassured.

"All's well at home, Hugh dear; it s not *that* which brought me over. I came to tell you that the marriage day is fixed. They are to be wedded in St. Gurlott's next Wednesday morning."

I knew of whom she spoke, though she mentioned no names, and I was both surprised and angry that she should travel to me with so sorry a message. She saw the darkness gathering in my face, and cried eagerly:

"Hugh, dear, don't be angry! I felt I must come and tell you —for oh! it is breaking my heart, as well as yours."

I looked at her in amazement.

"Breaking your heart?" I echoed. "What is it to you?"

"It is everything to me. Master George, though he is going to wed Miss Graham, is my husband in the sight of God!"

"Then I was right!" I cried. "I was right from the first. The villain! He led you from your home!"

She bent her head in weeping acquiescence. All my spirit arose once more against her, for though I had suspected the truth, her confession came upon me like a thunder-bolt. I looked at her in horror as, stretching out her hands pitifully to me, she proceeded,

"Hugh, dear, I promised that I would one day tell you everything, and it is for that I came. I waited on till the last, I thought to hold my peace, I hoped and prayed that he would never go so far; but when I heard the day was fixed, my mind was made up—to hold my peace no more. But first I went to him, and prayed to him on my knees. Then, finding that it was all in vain, I determined to come *here*."

"You are speaking of George Redruth?" I asked, sternly.

"Yes—of the young master."

"You left home in his company? You were together in London?"

"God help me—yes!"

"Why have you screened him so long?"

"Because I made him a promise. Because I believed until the very last that he might make amends. Because—because—I did not wish to see him harmed! Oh, Hugh, forgive me! don't look at me like that! You promised to be a brother to me always. Keep your promise now."

How could I resist her sad appeal? I was a churl to repulse her, even for a moment. But, casting off the mask of severity, I kissed her, and placed her in a chair. As she looked up at me with her pleading tearful eyes, I silently cursed the scoundrel who had been the cause of her trouble; but for her, poor girl, I had only sympathy and love. Then a thought crossed my mind, and I asked eagerly,

"Have you spoken of this to any one else? Does my uncle know?"

She shook her head.

"No one knows but yourself," she replied. "How could I speak of it to any one but you?"

"So much the better," I returned. "Evil enough has come of all this already, and, I would not for the world that it should reach the old man's ears. He believes George Redruth blameless. God knows what he might do, if he knew him to be as guilty as you say."

Full of the new thoughts her confession had awakened, I walked up and down the room; after a little while I bent over her again, and took her hand.

"Annie, I must know everything; not part of the truth, but the whole; then, perhaps, I can help you. But first, about this marriage? You say it is now a certain thing?"

"Yes, Hugh. That is why I came."

"You did well," I answered. "Now, tell me the whole story."

She obeyed me, and I listened in deep agitation. Simply, clearly, she described to me all that had taken place, from the day she had first left her home.

CHAPTER XXX.

ANNIE'S STORY.

It was a long and painful story, delivered not consecutively, but brokenly, in a series of vivid episodes; and so agitated was I by what I heard, that it was some time before I was able to piece it all together. At last, however, the whole truth was made clear to me; and I shall now do my best, in form, to make it clear to the reader.

For a long time Annie had resisted George Redruth's solicitation that she should leave her home. Her whole nature revolted against the pain which such a step might cause; besides, he had persistently averred that it was his intention to make her his wife, and Annie, brought up as she had been with a simple faith in human nature, saw no reason, since all was straight and honorable, for so much secrecy in the matter.

"It would break my father's heart," she said to him, again and again. "It will bring dishonor upon my home and upon myself. Why should we act so?"

But George Redruth was specious in his pleading. He pointed out to her that since they were to be married, there would be no dishonor. That if her good name was tarnished for a time through the enforced secrecy of the whole proceedings it would shine all the brighter afterward, and as for himself—why, he would love her a hundred-fold for this slight sacrifice; in fact, he took full advantage of his gentlemanly manners and superior education to lure her on to destruction. "I am sure he really and truly loved me then," said poor Annie, as she recounted those scenes to me. "Ah, Hugh, there was love in his voice and in his eyes, real true love that no one could doubt; and was it any wonder then that I never doubted it: when he took me in his arms and kissed me I felt that I could go to sleep and never wish to waken again."

Nevertheless, poor Annie brought all the strength of her nature to her aid, and resisted him almost to the last.

Even after she had finally been brought to consent to his proposition, she repented before many hours had passed away, and went to him again with a determination to break with him once and for all. It was the night preceding that on which she left her home. They had arranged not to meet again, but Annie, reckless of consequences, had sent a note to him, asking him to meet her. She got no answer to the note, but at ten o'clock, the time she had named, she went to their usual place of meeting, and here she was soon joined by George Redruth. He looked impatient, and even angry. Instead of taking her in his arms and kissing her as usual, he began to chide her for her thoughtlessness in sending up the note.

"If my mother had seen it," he said, "and questioned me about it, it would have been awkward. What do you want, Annie? I thought everything was settled last night."

"And so it was," returned Annie, beginning to tremble at her own boldness. "But I wanted to see you to-night to say that I have changed my mind."

"Changed your mind; what the deuce do you mean?"

"Just this, sir," continued Annie, who grew bolder as she went on. "I am sure that what we are going to do is not right, and can never bring happiness to any soul; let us just wait as we are, and be as we are till you can marry me openly, and take me to your home."

"You are a little fool," returned Redruth, impatiently; "but you will find I am not to be befooled. If you wish to break with me, say so, and we will not see each other after to night."

It would have been well for poor Annie if she could have taken him at his word; but, alas! it was too late. He had made her love him so passionately, that sooner than lose him altogether, she felt she would make any sacrifice on earth.

Therefore she clung helplessly to him, sobbing bitterly.

"No, do not go from me—I can not bear to lose you!"

He saw he had gained his point, and grew soft again. He laid her head on his shoulder, stroked her tear-stained cheek, and kissed her.

"Oh, Annie, Annie," he said, "you are a silly little thing. When you talk as you did just now, you make me think that you don't care for me at all, and that your only reason in wishing to marry me is the temptation to fill the position I offer you as my wife. My dear, if I did not love you so devotedly I should doubt your love. They say to love is to have implicit faith: you have no faith in me!"

"Oh, yes, I have!"

"Then why not show it? Come, tell me that! Why hesitate and cry as if I am about to bring you to some dire distress. Yet, after all, what have I asked you to do? Only what hundreds of girls have done before you—to be married secretly instead of openly, to conceal the fact of our marriage for a few weeks only, and then to come back with me, my honored wife, to share my home."

Yes; the story was specious enough; little wonder indeed that Annie was befooled, seeing that she loved him so. Once more she promised implicit obedience to all his wishes, and left him.

It was the last night she was to spend in the cottage, and during that night she never closed her eyes; but she lay awake, watching the moonbeams as they crept in at the window, thinking of all that was past and what might possibly lay before her. If George Redruth had spoken fairly—and why, she asked herself, should she doubt him, and he had really very little to dread. If her father and mother suffered pain at her sudden flight, it would be for such

a very little while; and afterward the great joy which her return would bring them would make amends for all. Still, Annie was not satisfied; her training had been rigid, and now her conscience troubled her sorely; but it was too late to repent: since that interview of the night before she felt she dare not disobey her lover.

She rose early and came out of her bedroom while my uncle and I were preparing to pay our early visit to the mine. We were both astonished to see her up, but she said, as an excuse for any excessive paleness, that she had a bad headache and could not rest in bed.

My uncle took her face between his hands and kissed it fondly, murmuring,

"This won't do, we maun ha' roses in these cheeks o' yourn. What would I do wi'out my little lass!"

Annie stifled a sob, and turned away with her eyes full of tears. She put on her hat and waked with us half the way to the mine—a thing she had never done before. She held my uncle's hand all the way, I remember, and asked him to kiss her when she decided to go back and make things ready for the day at home.

We got home rather earlier than usual that evening, and when we reached the cottage we found Annie busy setting out the things for tea. It had been baking-day, and it seemed as if she had been assisting at the work, for her cheeks were flushed now, and all her listless tearful manner of the morning had entirely disappeared. I could not help noticing that her hands trembled, that she seemed excessively nervous, and was strangely eager to anticipate my uncle's every wish. My aunt rebuked her once or twice for what she termed her light-headedness, but Annie only put her arms round her neck and kissed her.

"Don't scold, mother, don't scold," she said, "you wouldn't like it if I wasn't here!"

We sat up pretty late that night, and Annie was amongst the last to retire. When my uncle rose to go to bed, Annie kissed him several times, and my aunt rebuked her again for her foolishness. Then Annie kissed her again and again.

"You don't mean half you say, mother;" she murmured, "you know you love me!"

When we had all retired, and Annie found herself in her room alone, she sat down and cried very bitterly. Her last adieus had been said, the time for her departure was near at hand, and all her spirit seemed going. Again she hesitated; and had she been left to herself that night, that fatal step would never have been taken.

Suddenly she started, a faint whistle reached her from without. Hurriedly drying her eyes, she opened the window. There was George Redruth standing just outside.

"Are you ready, dearest?" he whispered.

"Yes!" she replied.

"Is there any one about?"

"No! they are all in bed; I think they must be asleep. It is getting late, isn't it?"

"It is close on midnight. Give me out what things you are going to take; I hope it isn't much, and then come round and join me at the door."

Annie had collected a few necessaries, and they were made up into a small parcel. She lifted it, and as she did so her tears began to flow afresh. With the parcel in her hands, she returned to the window.

"George!"

"Yes, darling?"

"Are you sure I am doing right? Are you sure you will bring me back very soon, so that I do not cause them much pain?"

"Haven't I sworn it? and yet you doubt me. If you are going to be foolish again, you will drive me from you; and Heaven knows what the consequences may be. Come, we have no time to lose; be brave, it is your only chance."

"Very well, I will trust you," she said, as she handed the little packet to him, and closed the window. It was the work of a moment to clothe herself in her thickest cloak and darkest, plainest bonnet; then she hurriedly disarranged the bed, and left the room. She was trembling violently, and crying like a child. She paused at the door of the room where her mother and father were sleeping; and, kneeling there, prayed to God to forgive her for what she was about to do. Even then, she paused and hung back; but George Redruth, growing impatient, entered the kitchen and took her forcibly away.

It was midnight, and pitch dark; there was not a soul abroad. Holding the parcel with one hand, and clutching the girl firmly with the other, George Redruth hurried her off. Where they went she could not tell, but they soon came upon a dog-cart and a high-stepping bay. Annie learned afterward that this had been driven out from Falmouth that evening by Johnson, who stood there waiting for her now. George Redruth addressed him.

"Is all ready?"

"It is, sir."

"The horse fresh?"

"Very."

"That's all right. Remember my instructions, and carry them out to the letter."

He tossed up the little bundle; kissed Annie and lifted her in; then, before she could utter a syllable, Johnson sprung in, and they were off, leaving George Redruth behind them. Now, in all his conversations with Annie, George Redruth had said nothing of his plan of sending her away with Johnson, fearing, no doubt, that if she knew her lover was not to accompany her, all her courage would go. When, therefore, she found herself in this plight, poor Annie's distress increased, and she asked some explanation of her companion.

"It's all right," he answered, kindly enough. "He can't come to-night, but he'll join us in London."

Meantime, the horse, a very fast trotter, was speeding along like lightning, covering mile after mile, and plunging further and further into the darkness.

About six o'clock in the morning they drove into Falmouth, and pulled up the steaming horse before the door of the best inn. The travelers were evidently expected, for there was a porter and a groom sitting up for them; and while the groom took possession of the horse, Johnson himself conducted Annie to her room and left her at the door.

"You have only a few hours for rest," he said; "we must catch the eleven o'clock boat for Portsmouth."

Left to herself, Annie threw off her cloak and hat, and looked round the room. It was a pretty chamber, much grander than anything she had ever been accustomed to before. There were dainty hangings to the bed, and pretty dimity curtains to the windows. Moreover, there was a cheerful fire burning in the grate. Beside the hearth there was a large, comfortable-looking easy-chair, into which she threw herself.

She had not closed her eyes for two nights, and was utterly weary both in mind and body; and as her head fell back upon the soft cushions of the chair, she fell into a sound sleep.

She was awakened by a loud knocking at the door. She started up; it was broad daylight, and the fire was out and the room looked cold and cheerless She opened the door, and found the chambermaid standing outside with a jug of hot water in her hand.

"It's ten o'clock, miss," said the girl. "The gentleman says you shall have your breakfast here in a quarter of an hour."

Dazed and half stupefied, Annie took the jug from the girl's hands, and, closing the bedroom door again, began to arrange herself for the day.

At the end of the fifteen minutes, the chambermaid returned with the breakfast, temptingly arranged on a tray; a few minutes later Johnson made his appearance. Instead of standing at the door as the chambermaid had done, he entered the room and closed the door behind him.

"All ready?" he began cheerfully. "That's all right!" Then his quick eye fell upon the bed and the breakfast, and he gave a peculiar whistle. "Come, this won't do," he said; "no sleep and no food, you'll wear yourself out, my dear!"

These words, spoken rather kindly, touched Annie's heart, and she began to cry

"I can't go on, Mr. Johnson," she said. "I know my coming away has been a mistake. I should like to go back again!"

After his first surprise was over, Johnson pointed out to her the utter improbability of any such attempt; and, after a good deal more crying, Annie saw the force of his argument and yielded. Yes: the fatal step had been taken—it was too late to think of returning now; the only thing to do now was to make the best of matters and go right on. So Annie again put on her cloak and bonnet and announced herself ready to go.

"You had better put on a veil," said the practical Johnson. "We may be seen, and that would be awkward for me. Haven't got one! Well, upon my word, you are a little simpleton; but we must make the best of it; I suppose. Here take my arm and hang your head a bit; we'll get on board as quick as possible, and perhaps will escape scot-free."

They passed down the stairs, entered a closed cab which stood at the door, and were rapidly driven away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANNIE'S STORY (*concluded*).

At seven o'clock that same evening, the two arrived in London, Johnson tolerably contented with himself for the neatness and dispatch with which he had managed the journey, little guessing that he had been detected by the keen eye of John Rudd. Arrived at Euston, a four-wheeler was summoned, and the two got into it and were driven away. Then Johnson turned to Annie.

"My dear," he said, "I may as well make you acquainted with our plans now. The fact is, the master won't be able to join you for a week, and I am going to stop and take care of you till he comes. I have taken some apartments for that week in a hotel; and, in order to simplify matters, I have given our names as Mr. and Miss Johnson. Therefore, for the time being, you are my sister, Miss Annie Johnson. Do you understand?"

Annie nodded. She quite understood; though she was beginning to feel alarmed as well as puzzled at the strangeness of the whole proceedings. She was still more alarmed at the subsequent manner in which Johnson conducted himself. True, he had taken rooms in the hotel, as he had said—private rooms, which they occupied in common. She was apparently allowed to go and come at will; yet she soon found that she was as much a prisoner as if she had been inclosed by iron bars. Whatever she did, Johnson knew of; and once or twice, when she attempted to write to her friends, he quietly but firmly refused to allow any such thing.

"Look here," he said, "don't you think this here game is to my taste at all, 'cause you'd be wrong. I've done a goodish many things in my time, but running away wi' girls, and keepin' 'em caged up like birds, ain't one of 'em; however, I gave my word to young Redruth as I'd keep ye square till he came, and I'm agoin' to keep my word; but precious glad I shall be when these six days are over."

In due time the six days came to an end, and Annie received from Johnson the glad intelligence that on the afternoon of the sixth day her lover would be with her. Trembling with excitement and joy, she obeyed her woman's instinct, and hastened to make herself look her very best. She arrayed herself in the pretty gray dress which she had brought with her from her home, and put some flowers at her throat; so that when, a few hours later, young Redruth arrived, he clasped her to him again and again, and, looking into her tear-dimmed eyes, said he had never seen her looking so pretty in all her life."

"And you will never go away from me again," said Annie, as she clung, sobbing, to him; "you will always stay with me?"

"Always, my darling."

"And we—shall—be married—"

"This very night. Though I have been away, I have not been unmindful of my duty to you, my pet. I have arranged for our marriage; I have taken a house where we will live. We will go straight from here after dinner, and get the ceremony over. It will

be a quiet marriage, and, to you, a strange one, I fear. It will not be solemnized in a church, with all the brightness and beauty that should have surrounded my darling. We shall go before a registrar and be married quietly—this is another sacrifice which my love demands."

But this was no sacrifice to Annie so long as she was married, and knew her love to be no sin—that was all she asked: so she cried a little on this shoulder; but it was for joy, not sorrow.

Everything seemed changed now the young master had come. A charming little dinner was ordered and served in the handsome sitting-room, which during the past week had been occupied by Johnson and Annie. The little party of three sat down to it—Redruth making the most convivial of hosts; after the dinner was over, Johnson took his leave; and the lovers were alone. There was no time just then for billing and cooing; if anything was to be done it must be done quickly, for the day was well nigh spent. George told Annie to get on her bonnet and cloak; she did so, and the two got into a hansom and were driven away.

How strange it all seemed to her—to be speeding thus through the streets of London with her future husband by her side. She was on her way to be married, dressed in an old bonnet and cloak which she had often worn at St. Gurlott's, with no wedding favors, no joyful faces about her. Looking back upon this episode in later years, she saw in it the dreadful foreshadowing of all that was to follow, the misery, the degradation, the shame. But at the time she saw nothing of all this; the sordidness was illuminated to her by the fact that she had beside her the one man whom, above all others, she loved—and who loved her.

The memory of that episode had faded somewhat away. She remembered only faintly that the hansom set them down before the door of a dingy office in some back slum of London, that before two men the marriage ceremony was gone through, and that when she re-entered the cab she wore a wedding ring on the third finger of her left hand, and firmly believed herself to be Mrs. George Redruth.

The house which he had taken for her, and to which he conducted her immediately after the ceremony, was situated in a London suburb It was an elegant little mansion, furnished and fitted in a style which completely dazzled poor Annie. But in those early days of their union he certainly loved her as much as it was in his power to love: and Annie was happy. Besides, he was always with her: during the day they drove together, and in the evening

they went to the theater or opera—Annie clad in silks and satins like some great lady of the land. But things could not be expected to go on so forever; and after awhile, Redruth began to leave her; for short periods at first, and afterward for longer—and his manner, at first so ardent and overflowing, gradually cooled. At first, Annie was heart-broken, and during his absences, cried bitterly in the secrecy of her own room. Then she brought reason to her aid, and acknowledged to herself that it was the lot of every happy bride to pass through the experience which was coming to her. After a man had become a husband, it was impossible for him to remain a lover—at least, she had been told that was the common belief, so she must try to be content. But at times, try as she would, she could not help grieving. Thus it was that George Redruth found her very sad one evening, when he returned to her after an absence of several days. He came in jovial enough, for he had been dining at the club with some friends. He took her in his arms and kissed her; then he looked into her eyes.

"Why, Annie, what's this?" he said. "You've been crying."

"Just a little, because I felt so lonely. It is so dreary here when you are away, and you are away so much now."

"If I am, it is no fault of mine, my pet; important business, which you would not understand, occupies nearly all my time; affairs are getting so complicated that, unless I do something and quickly, I shall be a beggar. But come, it's only for a little while, when things are put straight, as I hope they will be soon, we will go abroad and be constantly together. Now, dry your eyes, darling, and see what I have brought you."

He produced a little packet, opened it, and showed her a gold bracelet.

"Isn't it pretty?" he asked.

"Yes; it is pretty, but—"

"Well, my pet?"

"There is something I would rather have than all the bracelets in the world."

"What is that, Annie?"

"The sight of my home, and of my dear father and mother. Oh, George, why can I not write to them and tell them that I am your wife?"

"You are foolish, and don't know what you are saying. A little while ago, when you first came here, you said if you could let them know that you were well and happy it would content you. I allowed you to write, yet you are unhappy and complaining to me

again. I have told you repeatedly that I have most important reasons for wishing to keep our union secret."

"Yes, I know, but it seems so strange, so unkind."

"Annie, can you not be patient for a little while? If you loved me as you say, you would obey and trust me."

"I do trust you," she returned, "with all my heart and soul! For your love I have forsaken everything—home, kindred, friends—but when we came away together you promised that in a little time I should return with you to those who are dear to me. I have waited very patiently; but to live on here alone in London, to feel that they think ill of me and are mourning for me far away—oh! I can not bear it; it breaks my heart!"

"They know that you are alive and well. Surely that is enough."

"Ah, if you knew how dear I am to them! Since I was a child, until the day I came away with you, I had never left my home. It seems so dreary in London after my happy home! Often when you are gone I sit at the window there and look out on the great city; and when I hear the murmur of the folk it seems like the sound o' the sea."

"My darling, this is mere sentiment, which you will forget. Surely London, with all its life and gayety, is merrier than that dreary place where I first found you like a flower in a desert unworthy of such beauty? Come, kiss me, and try to confide in me a little while yet. I wish to make you happy. I love you truly, and dearly; but I have much upon my mind of which I can not as yet speak freely. Try to be contented here a little longer; then, perhaps, the mystery will end. You *will* try, won't you?"

"Yes, George; I will try!"

So the discussion ended, and for a time things went on as they had done before. His absences became more frequent and more prolonged; but Annie, since that last talk with him, had learned to look with different eyes upon her lot, and bore all without a murmur. She could not blame him, she loved him too well for that; and after all, she thought, she could not rationally blame him for anything. He had done all that he could do. He had made her his wife, he had given her a home fit for the greatest lady, he had even allowed her to write to her friends, saying that she was happy. He could do no more.

But this blissful state of things was not destined to last. Redruth came to her one day and told her that the house in which she lived had become too expensive for his means; that he had taken rooms for her, and that she must remove to them with all possible speed.

Annie was quite content to do as he wished. She had never had much taste for splendid surroundings, and the house, without her husband, was dreary enough. Accordingly, she was removed to the apartments in which I afterward found her living in the Strand.

"Very little happened to me worth telling," said Annie, continuing her narrative, "until that day when I met you, Hugh. Ah! I shall never forget that day. After you had left me, being dragged away by those men who accused you of murder, I remained in that room stunned and stupefied, utterly incapable of realizing what had happened. Then it all came back to me. I seemed to see again your reproachful look—to hear again the dreadful words you uttered when you left me.

"'When the time comes,' you said, 'may you be as well able to answer for your deeds as I shall answer for mine. The trouble began with *you*. If murder has been done, it is your doing also—remember that!'

"Those were the words, Hugh. Night and day they have never left me, and I think they never will until I die. Ah! if I had only died then! But it is just that I should live on—it is part of my punishment to live on and see those that I love best in all the world droop and suffer day by day for the wrongs that I have done.

"Well, Hugh, I was stunned, as I tell you; then suddenly I recovered myself, and rushed, screaming, to the door, with some wild idea of saving you, and bringing you back, when I was met at the door by my husband. Whether or not he knew anything of what had taken place, I don't know. I was too much agitated myself to think of him. But in a wild fit of excitement and terror, I clung to him and told him all. When I had finished my tale, he looked at me with such a calm, cold gaze, it nearly drove me mad.

"'It's a very bad job,' he said; 'but really I don't see what I can do?'

"'Then I will tell you,' I answered. 'You can take me back to St. Gurlott's, and help me to prove that my cousin is innocent—as he is, God knows!'

"'Take you back to St. Gurlott's?' he said. 'In what capacity; as Annie Pendragon, or as my wife?'

"'As your wife,' I replied.

"Oh, Hugh, I shall never forget the look that came into his eyes. He smiled as he replied,

"'I can not do that, because you are not my wife.'

"'Not your wife!' I repeated, scarcely believing that I heard aright, but having once begun it seemed easy for him to continue.

"'No,' he replied, 'you are not my wife. If you hadn't been a little fool you would have known it long ago.'

"'But we were married,' I persisted.

"'We went through a marriage ceremony,' he replied, 'because I wanted to guard against long faces and reproachful looks. After the ceremony you were perfectly contented, but I knew that we were no more man and wife then than we had been before. The ceremony was a mock one, the Registrar was an impostor, whose services I had bought; if he hadn't been he would never have performed the ceremony in the evening; if you hadn't been a fool you would have known that a marriage is no marriage is that performed after twelve o'clock in the day.'

"Again I looked at him in petrified amazement; then, realizing what all this meant to me, I fell sobbing at his feet.

"'George,' I cried, 'tell me you are not in earnest—say it is not true!' but all his love for me seemed to have died away; without a look he turned from me.

"'It is true!' he said.

"'Ah! don't say so,' I cried, clinging helplessly to him. 'Say that I am your wife; it is the only comfort I have had left to me during all these weary months that have passed away since I left my home! Do not take that from me! In Heaven's name, have pity! Ah, you would have me think ill of you; but I will not. You would never be so base as to deceive me so! You, whom I loved and trusted so much, would never wreck my life and break my heart. I'll not believe but you are my husband still!'

"I covered my face with my hands, and cried bitterly. After a while he came to me and raised me from the ground.

"'Annie,' he said, 'my poor little girl, be comforted. I have told you the truth—you are not my wife! You can never be that; the difference in our stations is so great that a marriage with you would be my ruin. I have deceived you cruelly; but my heart is still yours, and till death comes I shall love and protect you. We will leave this place; we will leave England together. Then, far away, in some freer, brighter land, where these distinctions do not exist, we shall dwell in happiness and peace.'

"But I shrunk from him.

"'Do not touch me!' I cried; 'do not speak to me like that!'

"'What is it you regret?' he asked—'A mere form! Love is still love, despite the world!'

"'Love is not love,' I replied, 'till sanctified and proved. You have profaned it! You have broken my heart and destroyed my peace forever.'

"'You talk wildly, Annie,' he returned. 'I tell you I will atone. All I have is yours; and I will devote it to your happiness. Can you not forgive me?'

"'Forgive you?' I replied. 'Yes, God help me, I forgive you. Good-bye!'

"'Why, where are you going?

"'Back to my home.'

"Before I could say more, the expression of his face changed.

"'I see,' he said; 'you wish to ruin me. To publish all over the village the story of what I have done. You will not stand alone disgraced—you would disgrace me, too. But I am not such a fool as to let you. You are with me now; you will remain with me until I choose to let you go.'

"At the time, I did not know of anything that had happened at St. Gurlott's since I had left it. I know now he dreaded to be exposed before Madeline Graham. He kept me a prisoner in those rooms for several days; but at last I managed to make my escape. You know what happened after that, Hugh. I made my way to Falmouth; and there you found me, when I was almost starving. If you had not discovered me I should have died."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE RETURN HOME.

THUS I have pieced together the narrative which my cousin retailed to me in little episodes, lingering, as women will, on details which seemed trivial in themselves, but which, when carefully criticised, were full of significant meaning. Lost in astonishment and indignation, I heard till the end—when the whole of George Redruth's villainy was apparent.

My experience of the world was, as the reader knows, most rudimentary; I knew next to nothing of its viler passions, still less of its great crimes. That any human being calling himself a man could be capable of cold-blooded treachery to a woman whom he promised to love was almost incredible to me; I had heard of such things, but they had appeared to me always in the nature of romance. But if I was aghast at the record of George

Redruth's evil doing, I was no less amazed at Annie's extraordinary patience under wrongs so monstrous. The man had deserved no mercy.

I said as much, in bitter enough language; but Annie only wept, and shook her head.

"Bad as he has been to me, I am sure he has a kind heart; and oh! Hugh, I loved him so much. And he used to love me, I am sure, till Miss Graham came between us."

"You say that you went through a ceremony of marriage?" I said. "Annie, I believe you are his wife after all!"

"In the sight of God I am. But Hugh, dear, if it had been a real marriage, he would never dare to wed again."

"Such a scoundrel would dare anything," I cried, fiercely. "It is well you came to me, for there is yet time. He shall do you justice! If he refuses to do so, I will teach him such a lesson that he will never again dare to hold his head up before the world!"

If the truth must be told, Annie's story, painful and terrible as it was, brought me a certain sense of relief. If it were true —and how could I doubt it, coming to me with such sad assurance of truthful tears and protestations?—surely Madeline would never consent to marry the author of such mischief. Whatever happened, she must know the truth without delay; and, all other means failing, she should hear it from my own lips. Yes, face to face with the man who was to be her husband, I would warn her of his unworthiness; not, alas! in any hope that his overthrow could ever be my gain, but purely in the wish to save her from future misery and degradation. If, after having been assured of the truth, she still persisted in the union, she would do so with her eyes open, and I—I should have done my duty. Such a contingency, however, was scarcely possible.

Long after Annie had told me everything she had to tell, John Rudd came in and joined us. He had, doubtless, prolonged his absence, knowing that we had much to say to each other. When I told him that it was my intention to return at once to St. Gurlott's with my cousin, he seemed astonished, but made no remark; nor did Annie herself, though I saw that she was terrified at what might ensue, offer any objection.

Leaving them in the cottage to partake of some simple refreshment, I walked down to interview Lord ——'s solicitor, and fortunately found him at home. I informed him that domestic circumstances necessitated my return to St. Gurlott's for several

days, and that, in the event of his refusing to give me leave of absence, I should simply throw up the situation. I saw he did not wish to lose me, and rather than do so, he assented to my departure, making me promise, however, to return as soon as possible.

Early in the afternoon, we left Gwendovey in the country cart, John Rudd driving, and I seated by Annie's side. On reaching Torborne, I was eager to push on home at once, and succeeded in hiring at the inn a gig and a fast trotting horse. So we said good-bye to our friend the carrier, whose wagon was waiting for him in the town, and whose business would lead him next morning Falmouthward, and, after night-fall, turned our faces to the west.

It was a long journey; traveling nearly all night, at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour, we did not sight the old village till it was almost daybreak. We said little on the way; our hearts were too full for much talk; but now and again I questioned my cousin about the past, and every piece of information I elicited showed me more and more that George Redruth deserved no mercy. All that I heard, too, implicated the murdered man Johnson in the infamous plot for Annie's ruin. Well, *he* had paid the penalty of his guilt—terribly, swiftly, and unexpectedly; and it was some comfort, at least, to know that, although he was not the main mover in the business, he had to a certain extent deserved his fate.

Though the sun was not up, some one was stirring in the cottage, for there was a light in the window. I jumped to the ground, helped Annie down, and paid the driver, who walked his horse off in the direction of the village.

"Annie," I said, as we paused at the cottage gate, "whatever happens, we must keep this from your father. For his sake, and for his sake only, we must act very cautiously. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Hugh," she answered. Alas! she understood little or nothing of what was really passing in my mind!

The door was unfastened; for, indeed, lock and key were in little request at St. Gurlott's, which was peopled with honest folk. We walked in, and, entering the kitchen, saw my uncle in his shirt-sleeves, reading by the light of a candle. I glanced at the book before him; it was the old Bible, with his own name, his wife's, and Annie's, with the dates of marriage and of birth, on the fly leaf.

We entered, but he did not look up. A poor scholar, he was spelling his way through a chapter, and muttering the words aloud. But when I drew nearer and spoke to him, he started up with a cry, pale as death, with the sweat standing in great beads upon his wrinkled brow.

"Who be thar?" he cried. "Help!"

"What, don't you know me?" I said, forcing a laugh. "It is I, Hugh Trelawney, and Annie, your daughter."

"Hugh! Annie!" he repeated, drawing his hand nervously across his lips. "Why, saw it be! Why did 'ee coom upon me so sudden like? I did not hear 'ee. Annie, my lass, I thought you were away at Gwendovey, wi' your cousin. What brings 'ee home saw soon?"

Annie and I exchanged looks, and, after a warning movement of the eyebrows, I replied,

"Oh, it's all simple enough. I was a bit homesick, and was going to run over when Annie turned up. I hope you're glad to see me, uncle? I'm sure I am to see *you!*"

I held out my hand, and he grasped it warmly.

"Glad enough, I reckon! Why, I ha' missed 'ee as it you had been gawn a year." He added, seeing my gaze rest on the open book before him, "I were reading a bit, my lad, when you come in; for I were restless like, and couldn't sleep. Your aunt's abed, and sound as a tawp, I warrant."

As he spoke, he closed the page nervously, as if fearing that we should see what portion of the book he had been reading. Annie stooped over him and kissed him tenderly; he looked up with a faint smile and patted her cheek.

"Hugh, my lad," he said presently, "I wish you had never left the mine."

"Why, uncle?"

"New overseer be a chap fro' Wales and naw manner o' good. All he thinks o' is to save money for the company, and he dawn't go down hissen once in a se'nnight Naw the place be wuss than ever. Out alawng to the blue gallery, the sea is safe to come in, some o' these days."

"I always said so," I returned. "It's an infernal shame that nothing has been done."

"Saw it be, lad. I spoke to Measter Jarge about it last neet, and he ha' promised to take a last look at 'un before he gangs away I says to him, says I, 'I dawn't care for mysen, but I'm afeared for the men, Measter Jarge, and I do hope summat'll be

done.' He were kind-spoken, as civil as he allays is, though some folk dawn't like 'un."

This was a gentle hint to me. Knowing what I did, and how cruelly my uncle's simplicity had been imposed upon, I could hardly refrain from committing myself, but I thought of the possible consequences, and held my tongue.

By and by my aunt came down, and we all breakfasted together; after which, my uncle went off to the mine. Not till he was gone did my aunt set free her tongue, but his departure was the signal for a series of questions as to the cause of my unexpected return.

The old man's mind was too full of his own troubled thoughts to have much room for conjecture; always simple, he now took things as they came, in a dazed, helpless manner pitiful to behold. With my aunt it was different. With her characteristic common sense, she perceived that my coming was due to no mere attack of homesickness, but betokened urgent business on hand.

She soon came to a natural conclusion—that I had been drawn thither by the news of the approaching marriage.

"You had better ha' stayed away," she exclaimed. "'Tis the awld tale o' the burned moth and the candle, lad! When Annie said she were gawing across to see thee, I were glad, thinkin' 'ee might be company till each other; but she took 'ee the news she should ha' kept to hersen, and nawt would please 'ee but coming where you warn't wanted."

"Never mind, aunt," I said, as cheerfully as possible. "I am not going to break my heart, at all events."

"May be nawt," she answered; "but you was better far away."

As soon as possible, I left the cottage, to think out the situation for myself. Now that I had come home, I felt in full force the awkwardness of my position. How was I to take firm ground in Annie's name, and yet keep the truth from my uncle, the shock to whose already shattered system I so much dreaded? From every point of view, indeed, the proclamation of the truth would be a calamity and a scandal; yet it must be made, for Annie's sake, for Madeline's. My only course was to proceed as cautiously as possible, first sounding the main actor in the drama and ascertaining what he had to say in his own defense. With this view I determined to go at once to Redruth House.

It was a wild windy day, with frequent showers of rain. As I approached the avenue, I heard the dreary "sough" of the wind in the trees, and my thoughts went back to the day when I, a boy, met George Redruth, a boy, in that very place. Nothing was

changed; the trees, the rusty gate, the quiet road, were all the same; yet what dark vicissitudes had come in all those years!

I had opened the gate, and was passing in, when a voice called me. I turned and saw my cousin. She had followed me from the cottage, with her shawl thrown over her head to protect her from the rain, which was falling heavily.

"Hugh," she cried, panting, and placing her hand on my arm, "where are you going?"

"Up to Redruth House. It was for that I came."

"Not to-day! Don't go to-day!" she exclaimed, trembling violently.

"I have no time to waste," I replied, "and I must have it out at once. Go home, and leave it all to me! I have promised to see you righted, and I will keep my word."

But she still clung to me, looking piteously into my frowning face.

"If you *must* go, promise me—"

"What?"

"Promise me that you will do nothing violent. Hugh, dear, he is a gentleman—do not provoke him too much!—and remember—remember—that I love him dearly."

"Can you still say that, knowing how he has used you?" I answered, almost savagely. "Well, you best know your own heart; and I know mine. I came to have it out with George Redruth, and I shall not rest until we meet face to face."

"Hugh, for God's sake—"

"There, there, do not be afraid," I said, "but do as I tell you—go home and wait for my return. I promise you that I will be careful. If only for my uncle's sake, I wish to avoid a public scene. But he must be made to confess, and Miss Graham must be warned."

I left her standing in the road, and looking after me as I ran rather than walked up the dreary avenue. At the last bend, just before I passed from sight, I turned, and there she stood still, watching. I waved my hand to her before I disappeared. As I came in sight of the house, I endeavored to keep very calm; but, in spite of the effort, my excitement grew—and no wonder, seeing the nature of my errand! But the chief cause of my emotion was the fact that I should soon, in all probability, see Madeline Graham.

I walked boldly up to the front door and rang the bell. In a few moments the door was opened by a man-servant.

"Is your master at home?" I asked.

"Mr. Redruth is in the drawing-room," replied the fellow. "What name shall I say?"

"I will announce myself," I answered, stepping into the hall.

Having already visited the house, I knew my way. As I strode across the hall, the man followed me, and tried to bar my passage; but I pushed him aside.

"Stand out of the way," I said, and, placing my hand on the drawing-room door, I threw it open. The man fell back in astonishment, and I strode in.

For my own part, I felt very like a savage; but I was in no sense of the word master of myself. I had the grace, however, to take off my hat.

I found myself in a large, elegantly furnished room, looking to the south and opening on a garden terrace. To my simple, unsophisticated gaze, it was splendid enough for a room in a palace; but in my present temper I was not to be daunted, even by the presence of a king.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FACE TO FACE.

ONCE inside the room, I looked keenly about me, to discover who the occupants might be. I could see only two—George Redruth and his mother. The old lady, looking very white and stately in her robe of black velvet, her snowy hair neatly arranged under some black lace, sat bolt upright in a quaint oak chair, working at some fancy-work. Near to her was her son, lounging carelessly in a low easy-chair, with his legs crossed, and an open book upon his knee. He certainly looked very handsome in his spotless clothes and snowy linen; and I wondered little that his mother's eyes rested upon him with such a look of affection, or that poor Annie was tempted beyond her strength when she saw that handsome face smiling upon her and heard those lips whisper so lovingly in her ear. George Redruth was not a man who bore upon his person the impress of his soul. He had a fair face and a specious manner; and any stranger looking at him would have believed him utterly incapable of cruelty or wrong-doing.

My unceremonious entry startled both mother and son. They both looked at me with an expression which was by no means amiable. They both asked what my business was there that night.

Before speaking, I looked again around the room. I wished to ascertain if Madeline was there. Apparently, she was not. Then I looked at the old lady, and hesitated again. After all, she was his mother, and she loved him. Where was the use of giving her pain? So I turned to him and said, as quietly as I could,

"My business is with *you*, sir. What I have to say had better be said to you alone."

He moved uneasily in his seat, and darted at me from under his brows a look of bitter hatred. I thought his face grew very pale, but he made an effort to preserve his cold manner.

"You are very mysterious," he replied; "but since you have thought it worth your while to force your way upon us as you have done, you had better say your say and go, before I order the servants to turn you out."

"You had better be careful," I replied. "Once more I warn you—what you have to hear had better be heard by you alone!"

He looked in my face again, and something he saw there convinced him of the truth of my words. He rose, and, throwing his book aside, said, with well assumed carelessness,

"Very well, since you will have it so; come out on the terrace and speak there."

He made a movement forward, and I was about to follow him, when there was another interruption of a most unexpected kind. Old Mrs. Redruth rose, and, making a stately motion with her hand, said,

"George, you will stay here."

She was very white, and her hands were twitching nervously. Seeing this, Redruth stepped forward with a look of deep anxiety on his face.

"Mother," he said, "don't agitate yourself, for God's sake! Let me go with him for a moment." But this she refused to do.

"You shall not leave me, George," she answered. "If he means to insult you, let him do so before your mother's face!"

The strange turn things were taking amazed me, and I cried:

"*I* insult *him?* You don't know what you are saying when you talk to me like that. I have returned to my home to obtain justice; to force a bitter wrong to be righted. I am here for that now."

It was now George Redruth's turn to be agitated. Turning on me a face livid with terror, he said,

"My mother is not well. Leave the house, I implore you, or God knows how this interview will end!"

This I refused to do.

"Whatever happens," I said, "no blame can be attached to me. I am willing to speak to you alone; but speak I mean to before I leave this house to-night. Tell me—is it true that in two days you propose to wed Miss Graham?"

He was about to answer me, but his mother interrupted him.

"Yes," she replied; "it *is* true. Now, sir, what have you to say?"

"This: that your son had better think well before he goes to lead that lady to the altar; because he knows as well as I that that marriage can never be."

"George, what does he mean?" asked the old lady, gazing from one to another in trembling agitation.

"For God's sake, mother, keep calm!" said George Redruth, who was himself terribly agitated; then he turned again to me. "Trelawney, leave the house," he said. "If you have anything to say to me seek me again; my mother is ill, and a scene such as this promises to be, will kill her!"

"I told you I was willing to speak to you alone," I said; "but since that can't be, other folk must hear. I am here to-day to ask for justice; you best know why and for whom. Do you mean to do it?"

He hesitated for a moment; then he said, glancing nervously about him,

"You speak in riddles, which I fail to understand."

"You had best try," I returned, irritated beyond measure by the strange coldness of his manner. "You know that you have done a wrong—do you mean to right it?"

By this time he had apparently made up his mind as to his course of conduct, for he replied, with that same cold sneer upon his lips,

"Again, I tell you, I fail to understand you."

"Then I will make my meaning clear. I am speaking of the woman whose heart you have broken and whose life you have destroyed; in the name of my cousin, Annie Pendragon, I refuse to allow this marriage to go on!"

I expected to see him cower before this blow, but I was mistaken; he was evidently prepared for anything I might say.

"My good man," he said, coolly, "you are raving, or worse. You take, I know, a very tender interest in Miss Graham's welfare; and think, I presume, that anything you may be pleased to state will be believed by her, and you will thus be able to degrade me

in her eyes. But you are mistaken. Both Miss Graham and my mother know me too well to believe one word of what you say!"

I must confess that the perfect frankness of his manner succeeded for a moment in putting me at a disadvantage. I could hardly bring myself to believe that he was lying, yet it must be so.

"Do you deny," I said, "the story which I have heard from my cousin's lips?"

"What your cousin may or may not have told you is no concern of mine. What is she to me?"

"She is your wife," I returned.

Still he retained his cold, impassive manner; but the old lady looked at him with troubled eyes. It was nothing to her that he had broken a heart or wrecked a home. According to her, the laborer was like the beast of burden; born to bear his load uncomplainingly, and to be trampled in the dust, if necessary, at his master's feet. But the fear that her darling had been made to link himself to one beneath him was terrible to her.

"George," she cried, imploringly, "what does he mean?"

He shook his head; but I replied,

"I mean, madam, that it was your son, and none other, who brought all the trouble to our home. Through him, and him alone, murder has been done; and simple trusting hearts have been broken. He came with his specious smiling face and lying tongue, and wrought the ruin of as good a lass as ever breathed. Finding her to be good and pure, he heaped falsehood upon falsehood until he got her in his power; then, coward that he was, he told her of the trap into which she had fallen—and left her to the mercy of a merciless world. Cowardly, treacherous cur as he is, he has betrayed one woman, but he does not betray another. Let him go to the altar with Miss Graham; and, so sure as he stands living before me now, I will denounce him before them all."

"You villain! do you mean to threaten me?" exclaimed Redruth, losing for the first time some of his self-command.

"And if I do," I returned, "I don't threaten what I can't perform. My cousin has been silent hitherto because she wished to spare you; she has returned good for evil, cruelty with kindness; but now that she has spoken—now that I know the truth—I am determined that she shall receive justice. Do you think that she alone is to suffer—that she must stand alone in her shame, to be pointed at by every honest woman? I say again she is your wife; if not by the laws of man, at least in the sight of God; and so long as she lives you shall not wed another woman!"

I paused and looked at him; his face was quite livid. He pointed to the door.

"Leave this house!" he cried, "or by Heaven I'll have you handed over to the police."

"I refuse to stir," I replied, "until I have your answer. It is in your power to partially retrieve the past by doing one act of justice. Villain as you have been, bitterly as she has been made to suffer, I believe my poor cousin loves you still. Make that mock ceremony a true one; take her to you as your honored wife; it is but justice; it is what I ask in her name."

"George!" cried the old lady, clinging to him in terror; but he only smiled, and said, "Don't agitate yourself, mother; the man is raving!"

"I have given you your last chance," I said. "Do you persist in your refusal to listen to me?"

"Hear me, Trewlawny," he said. "The story you have fixed upon me is one tissue of lies. If you say it is not, bring your witnesses to prove it; if you can not do so, your fabrication falls to the ground. I know nothing of your cousin, and I am not to be driven through fear into marriage with a peasant girl of light character."

"Good God!" I cried, "what do you mean?"

"This: that your cousin, whose moral character is well known, will not retrieve her deeds by vamping up this story against me. Women of her class are given to lying; she seems no exception to the rule!"

"Coward and liar!" I exclaimed. Utterly beside myself, I raised my clenched fist, and should have struck him to the ground. There was a shriek, and a heavy thud upon the floor. Terrified and heart-sick, I drew back, and gazed with wild eyes upon the figure of the old lady, which lay, apparently lifeless, at my feet. For a moment, I feared my clinched fist had fallen upon her, and laid her low; but I was soon reassured. She had been overexcited with the interview, and the fear that I was going to strike her son had deprived her of consciousness. In a moment a woman's figure was beside her, kneeling on the floor, and bending forward with tender solicitude over the wrinkled face. It was Madeline. Where she had come from I could not tell, she seemed to have arisen like a spirit from the earth. She was pale, but quite composed, and she seemed utterly unconscious of any presence save the one—that of the old woman. With tender hands she smoothed back the gray hair; she dipped her fingers in the bowl of water which George Redruth held, and drew them across the wrinkled brow; she

pressed her warm red lips to the white cheek, and murmured gently, "Aunt, dear aunt, open your eyes; it is I, Madeline!"

For a time the old lady lay motionless—I standing by, unable to move hand or foot, but feeling nothing but pity for her. Suddenly she stirred slightly and heaved a sigh; then Madeline raised her eyes and fixed them upon my face.

"Will you go, please?" she said, "for *her* sake. If she wakes and sees you it will be terrible."

That was enough; I was to obey *her* wish; so, utterly weary and heart-broken, I left the house.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A LAST FAREWELL.

In a strange, bewildered state of mind I left Redruth House, but, instead of going straight back to the cottage, I took a turn across the moor; I knew if I returned to the cottage in my present state of agitation I should betray myself. I must think matters over and come to some definite decision as to my movements in the future. There was no time to be lost; in two days the wedding would take place—therefore my course of action must be mapped out.

The tone which Redruth had chosen to adopt rather nonplussed me; for never for one moment did I take into consideration the fact that he might deny all knowledge of my cousin; yet now I saw that by so doing he gained considerable advantage. He had called upon me to prove the truth of my statement; how could I do so? For myself, I had been willing enough to accept Annie's version of the story as the true one, but it seemed that that was not enough. For proofs—how could I obtain them? Johnson, the prime mover in the affair, was dead; of the man who performed the marriage ceremony, Annie had no knowledge whatever; and even had it been otherwise, it would have taken time to discover him; and I had no time, since the marriage was to take place in two days. Yes; it was clear that my story must rely for its acceptance upon the word of my cousin; and if she chose to proceed and dispute that word, it was equally clear it could not be substantiated.

The next thing to be considered was my next move—what that ought to be, I could not determine; the fact that I must keep all knowledge from my uncle bound me hand and foot. If I denounced Redruth publicly, and made an open scandal, the whole

truth would be revealed to my uncle, and I positively trembled at the thought of what he might be tempted to do. I walked thus pondering for hours, finally feeling somewhat calmer, but, having arrived at no definite conclusion as to my future plans, I returned to the cottage. My uncle, aunt, and Annie were all there—moreover, there was honest John Rudd partaking of my aunt's tea and hot baked scones.

"It be loike awld times to see Measter Hugh amang us agen," said he, as I took my seat at the board; "reckon you'll be stayin' now, till after the weddin'."

I replied that since it was to take place so soon, I most certainly should.

"Ah, then, you'll ha' some o' the fun!" he continued; "there'll be rare gawins-on, I reckon. They tell me there'll be a tent put up on the fields, and a dinner given to all the miners. Be that true, Mr. Pendragon?"

"Mawst likely," returned my uncle. "I know nought o' that; but one thing be certain—the young measter, he be a gawin' down the mine wi' me to-morrow to see to things, and put matters right afore he gang away."

Listening to this, I inwardly thanked God that my uncle knew nothing of the real character of young Redruth.

During all this time, poor Annie had been moving about busily attending to the table; but I saw that what she did was done more to cover her agitation than from any real necessity. Now and again, placing herself in the shadow, she tried to read my face—in vain. When they spoke of the wedding, her eyes filled with tears, and her hands trembled violently.

I tried to avoid being alone with her that night, for I dreaded to tell her what had taken place; but she was overanxious, and would not let the night pass. When the house was quiet, all of us having gone to our rooms, there came a gentle tap at my bedroom door. Then the door opened, very quietly and stealthily; and Annie herself appeared.

"Hugh," she whispered, "are you in bed?' I answered "No;" and she came in, closing the door behind her. She was partially undressed, and had a large cloak wrapped round her. Her beautiful hair was loosened, and fell in a heavy mass upon her shoulders; her face was very pale, and her eyes were still wet with tears. She came up to where I sat on the side of the bed, and looked at me, stretching forth a trembling hand, which I took in mine.

"My poor Annie!" I said, involuntarily.

She seemed to understand all that my tone implied, for, with a pitiful sob, she shrunk down crying at my feet.

"Don't cry, Annie; don't cry!" I said. "He is a scoundrel. He is not worth one of those tears. You must forget him!"

"Forget him?" she sobbed. "Ah, Hugh, dear, it is not so easy to forget; for I love him so much—I never knew how much till now! Hugh, dear, she will not marry him, will she?"

"I can not tell."

"But you have told her? Does she know?"

"That I can not tell."

She looked at me inquiringly.

"Hugh, do you know what you are saying? Surely, if you told her, you must know."

"I have not told her; but she may know, for all that. There has been a strange scene, Annie; and I am a bit puzzled to know what is best to do. One thing, however, we must be careful to do—keep this from your father. He and the young master go down the mine to-morrow. If your father guessed the story you have told me, one of them might not come up again. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she answered, faintly; "but, Hugh, you have not told me what he said."

"I would rather not do so to-night, Annie. He means to go on with this marriage if he can; but I may find a means to prevent it. There is time yet. I must think it over, and see what can be done. But don't you worry yourself, little woman. I tell you he is not worthy to possess one hair of your head."

At breakfast the next morning my uncle again spoke of the approaching visit of the young master to the mine, and seemed in high spirits about it; nay, more, he seemed quite proud to think that he should have been selected above all others to take the part of guide.

"Measter dawn't take to the new overseer chap," said he. "I doubt but he'd be glad to ha' thee back i' thy awld place, lad."

I shook my head.

"You mustn't think of that, uncle. I'm well enough placed where I am."

Soon after breakfast he set out for the mine, where young Redruth was to join him. A couple of hours later a figure entered the kitchen where I sat ruminating, and, looking up, I was astonished to see Madeline.

Her face was very pale and sad, but there was a look of determination about her eyes and mouth which I had never seen there

before. She walked in at the open door and then stood hesitating, as if uncertain what to do. She answered my aunt's courtesy with a kindly nod and smile, and then she looked at Annie, who, pale as death, had shrunk from her. No word of greeting passed between these two, but I thought that the light in Madeline's eyes grew softer as she gazed upon the pale weary face of my cousin, while poor Annie showed in her face the bitter dislike she had taken to the woman who had supplanted her. Madeline turned to me.

"Mr. Trelawney," she said, "I wish to speak to you privately. Can I?"

I replied in the affirmative, and asked my aunt and cousin to leave us, which they accordingly did.

Left alone with Madeline, I felt my whole body tremble like a tree bending before the breath of the tempest. But I took courage to look at her, and thus I became somewhat reassured. Her whole demeanor was calm and cold; she made no attempt to approach me; but she walked over to the window, and looked out, turning only occasionally to glance at me while the interview lasted.

"Mr. Trelawney," she said, "when you paid your visit to Redruth House last night I was listening. I was in a remote and shaded part of the drawing-room when you entered; I remained there during the scene which followed. What I witnessed was too stormy to be very lucid. I want you to make it clear to me now."

"What do you wish me to do?"

"I wish you to tell me, if you will, the whole of your cousin's unfortunate story."

I did as she requested; not dwelling too much upon it, but making every point clear. When I had finished, Madeline said, quietly:

"How long have you known this story, Mr. Trelawney?"

"Two or three days. It seems that Annie had given some promise not to betray that man, and this promise she religiously kept until—"

"Yes, until—"

"Until she was driven to desperation by the announcement of his approaching marriage. Sick and heart-broken, she came to me and told me the story. Horrified beyond measure, I thought of you; and I dreaded to think what your life would be married to such a villain. I came here determined to face him; and, if possible, to prevent the marriage. I went to him in all good faith—you best know how I was received."

"Do you believe that his marriage with your cousin is legal?"

"No; I honestly believe it to be false."

"Then you mean to expose him? Since your cousin can not get justice, do you mean to make her wrongs known?"

I looked at her for a moment, then I answered:

"No; I have done all that I can do. To humiliate him *now* would be to humiliate you—moreover, it would lead to his certain death."

"His death? What do you mean?"

"This: that if I pointed him out as the betrayer of Annie Pendragon, my uncle would assuredly kill him!"

She started and trembled.

"Don't fear for him," I said; "he is safe from me. There has been trouble enough here already; God forbid that I should be the means of bringing more!"

There was a long pause. Madeline still stood at the window gazing out with sad, wistful eyes. Then she turned and came toward me.

"Mr. Trelawney," she said, "I think you are right when you say you will make no public scandal. Let this matter rest, and perhaps in time all may come well. You think that your cousin still loves Mr. Redruth?"

"God help her! Yes."

"Then let us pray that her love, and all her patient suffering will some day be requited!"

"I do not understand!" I said.

"No? then you think more badly of me than I deserve, though Heaven knows I have not deserved that you should think well of me. I told you once that I was marrying my cousin because he was poor and I was rich. What I told you, I told him; I knew I could never love him, but I wished to help him, and I should have done so. I should have married him; and once his wife, I think —nay, I am sure—I should have been able to do my duty. But when I gave that promise to him I believed him to be a good and honorable man. Now, all is changed. I believe every word of your story, Mr. Trelawney, and, believing it, I know I can never be united to him!"

She paused for a moment; but I could not speak. Presently she continued,

"Mr. Trelawney, I want you to give me your hand for a moment in token of your forgiveness. Heaven has not been merciful to either of us, and I think it would have been better for us both if we had never met. I shall leave this place to-morrow; but I shall never forget it, and I shall never forget you. God bless you!"

She pressed my hand warmly in both of hers, and the next moment she was gone. What followed seemed to me a wild dream. I remained for a time stupefied—drunk with mingled joy and sorrow; feeling the grasp of my darling's hand in mine, and hearing still the sound of her loving voice. Then I knew that my aunt and Annie had returned, and were questioning me as to Madeline's visit; but their questions were soon drowned in a strange murmur which reached us from without, and the next moment a wild group surged up and surrounded the kitchen door.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE COMING OF THE SEA.

"WHAT has happened?" I cried, running up and facing the terror-stricken men.

One of them, Michael Penmaur, a stalwart fellow of five-and-twenty, stepped forward and acted as spokesman.

"What you always said would happen, Measter Hugh. The main shaft be flooded wi' the sea."

What this betokened I well knew; if the sea had entered, that portion of the mine was destroyed forever.

"That's a bad lookout, my lads. Well, it was bound to come about; and if there is no one down below, and no life lost perhaps 'tis all for the best."

As I spoke, I saw them look wildly at one another, and whisper, and I guessed that they had something more to tell.

"What is it, lads?" I cried. "Speak!"

"Come outside, Measter Hugh," answered Michael Penmaur; "I'll tell 'ee there."

But my aunt, with a wild cry, sprung forward and grasped him by the arm.

"You shall tell it now!" she cried. "I can see it in your face, and my dreams ha' come true. Summit's happened to my man! Hugh, make him speak! I can bear it!"

At that moment Annie entered the room, descending from the chamber above, and the moment she appeared my aunt addressed her wildly.

"You ha' come in time, Annie Pendragon. All the trouble began wi' 'ee! Bid them speak, then, and tell what's happened to your father!"

"Oh, Hugh, what is it?" exclaimed poor Annie, coming to my side. I told her that the waters had flooded the mine.

"And father? where is father?" she said, with a sharp presentiment of the truth.

Michael Penmaur exchanged another rapid look with his companions, and then replied:

"Your father be dawn belaw, wi' the young maester?"

My aunt uttered a scream, and threw her hands up into the air.

"Dead!" she cried. "My dream again! You ha' killed him, Annie—you ha' killed your father!"

"No, no, mother! Don't say that!"

"Speak, lads!" I said. "Tell me everything, for God's sake!"

Then Michael Penmaur, as spokesman, told me, in a few rapid words, all he knew: that in the course of the afternoon George Redruth had descended the mine in company with my uncle for the purpose of inspecting the outer galleries—my uncle, indeed, having fetched him for that very purpose; that suddenly, while all were busy below, the alarm had been given, and, throwing down their tools, the men had rushed up the ladders, while simultaneously they heard a rush and roar like the sound of the entering sea; that as they ascended in wild alarm, the lower ladder broke beneath the weight of some of the men, who were precipitated with it into the darkness; and that, finally, when they collected at the mouth of the mine, they missed, besides several of their comrades, both George Redruth and my uncle.

I rushed to the door. By this time it was quite dark, and it was blowing hard from the south-west, with hail and rain. I thought with horror of that submarine darkness, and of those who were lying even then within it, alive or dead. My mind was made up in a moment. I did not even wait to speak to Annie or my aunt, but, calling on the men to follow me, ran right away in the direction of the mine.

The men followed me in a body. When we reached the cliffs, we found the wild news had spread, and an excited throng was gathered at the mine-head, some carrying torches, which cast lurid gleams on the rainy darkness. A heavy sea was rolling in on the strand beneath, and the white billows were flashing and crashing.

Suddenly a light hand was placed upon my arm, and turning, I saw Madeline; close to her, like a gaunt specter, Mrs. Redruth.

"Thank God, you are here!" cried my darling. "Is there any hope?"

I looked into her white face, and saw in its wild anxiety only love for my rival; but at that supreme moment I felt no jealousy —only supreme pity for her and *him*. Then I glanced at his mother, and heard her quick cry of supplication,

"Save him! Save my son!"

Dazed and horrified, I turned round and addressed the men:

"Is Mr. Redruth below?"

"Ay, ay, measter!" they answered in chorus.

"Who saw him last?"

"I did," said Michael Penmaur. "He were creeping wi' John Pendragon out beyond the bottom shaft."

I walked to the mouth of the mine, and threw open the wooden lid. Then, kneeling down, I held my ear over the mouth, and listened. A sound like thunder—a horrible rushing and roaring —came from below. I had no doubt now that the worst had happened.

The sea had entered the mine.

There was only one chance for those below, if by any possibility they survived. Some one must descend and make an inspection, even at the risk of his life; and, without a moment's hesitation, I determined to volunteer for the task. Strange to say, my head became quite cool and clear directly my resolve was made.

"Listen, lads!" I said. "There's hope yet, and I'm going down."

A faint cheer, mingled with a terrified murmur, greeted my announcement.

"It be no use, measter!" cried Michael Penmaur. "The ladders be clean gawn."

"I know that," I answered; "but if we can get safely down to the middle platform, I can descend from there by a rope. Run down to the office, some of you, and bring all the ropes and candles you can find."

They rushed off cheering; and, turning to those who remained, I explained my plan. Several of them, Michael Penmaur among the number, agreed to descend with me to the platform, and to lower me thence down the bottom shaft. In less time than it takes to write these lines, the messengers returned with several coils of rope, and candles; I stuck several of the latter about my person, and two or three in my wide-awake hat. Then I was ready.

I had set my foot on the first rung of the ladder, and was about to descend, when Madeline bent over me.

"God bless you," she cried, "and bring you safe back!"

I reached up, and taking her hand pressed it to my lips.

"If he lives," I said, "I'll restore him to you and to his mother. Don't cry, Miss Graham! There's a chance yet!"

I thought her tears fell for *him*, and yet, strange to say, she had my sympathy; all my wild jealousy seemed to have fallen from me like a discarded garment. What was my amaze therefore when, bending over me, she took my face between her two trembling hands, and kissed me on the forehead!

"God will bring you back!" she sobbed, and turned away.

Scarcely realizing the significance of what had occurred, I descended rapidly, followed by Michael and the volunteers. As I went, the roar from below increased, and the solid rock on which the ladder was set seemed to shake as with an earthquake. In pitch darkness I reached the first platform.

Here I paused, and, striking a light, lit the candles on my person. My companions did the same. The lurid light lit up their pale, anxious faces, and shot faint rays down into the mine.

"Now, then, lads!" I cried, descending the second stage of ladders. Some of these were shaky, and I had to use great caution; but I knew the way blindfold, and all my old experience of the place stood me in good stead.

At last, with no harm done to any one, we reached the central platform. Here the roar was deafening, and the solid rock seemed splitting with the sound.

I bent over the abyss, and held down the light, using my hand as a reflector. Surely enough, several of the ladders had broken away, leaving only the precipitous shaft, steep as the sides of a well. I strained my eyes into the darkness, and fancied I discerned, far beneath, something like the gleam of dashing water! Then I shouted—but my shout was drowned in the subterranean tumult.

On the central platform was a windlass, with a portion of an old disused crane. Round this I passed one of the ropes, instructing the men to hold one end and gradually give way or draw in as I should direct. Then I took the other end, and fastened it securely under my armpits.

"It be naw use, Measter Hugh!" cried Michael Penmaur. "Dawn't 'ee go. It be gawing to your death!"

But finding that I was not to be persuaded, the brave fellow wrung my hand, and promised to do his best to help me; nor were the others less kindly and sympathetic. As they lowered me over the platform, I partially supported myself against the slimy rocks; but the next moment I was suspended in air. Slowly, carefully,

they let me down, the candle on my person flickering and flaming, and lighting up the damp and oozy walls. At last, some twenty yards down, my foot rested on a ladder, descending which I reached the lowest platform of all.

Looking up, I saw far above me, as in a narrow frame, the faces of the men. I shouted to them, but they could not hear; but I waved a signal to them, and they answered back. Then I released myself from the rope and prepared to look around.

Suddenly my foot struck against something soft, like a body; and, stooping down, light in hand, I saw two of the miners lying among the débris of the broken ladder, stone dead, and dreadfully disfigured. One was Jem Tredgar, a colossal young fellow from Penzance, six feet high, and weighing over fifteen stone. The fall had smashed him like an egg, and death had been instantaneous.

Full of a new horror, I leaned over the platform and looked down. As I did so, my head went round, and I should have fallen had I not clutched again at the rope, which swung loose close to my hands.

Right under me, flooding the bottom of the mine, roared the sea, boiling backward and forward with wild pulsations along the shafts and galleries through which it had broken in. A salt spume rose from it, and the walls of the shaft were dripping and dashed with clots of foam. From the point where I stood, the last ladders had been entirely washed or broken away.

The roar was deafening, but I shouted with all my might. I paused and listened; no answer came.

Again I shouted; again I paused and listened.

Suddenly, from the darkness beneath, I heard a faint voice answering me.

My heart stood still. Then, with an effort, I shouted again.

The faint cry was repeated.

"Who's there?" I called; but the sound of my voice was blown away, and only the same faint cry came in answer.

I seized the rope, and, looking up to the men above me, pointed downward; they signaled, and seemed to understand. Then I secured the rope again under my armpits, and, signaling to them to give way, swung over the platform.

My instructions to the men had been simple. When I tugged once at the rope they were to lower away, when I tugged twice they were to stop lowering, when I tugged three times, sharply, they were to haul in. The further I descended, the greater grew my peril; for the rope was not a strong one, and many of the out-

jutting points of rock were sharp enough to sever it by friction; add to which, that the long swing at such a distance rendered it liable to break should there be anywhere a weak or rotten strand.

As I went down, I was conscious of flying spray and splashing water; and when I had descended some fifteen yards, my feet touched the sea. However, I made no sign, but, entering the water, found myself waist-deep, but touching the bottom. Then I tugged twice at the rope, and looked about me.

The spot where I stood formed a sort of submerged shingle, sloping down to the deeper portions of the shafts and galleries. On every side the sea rushed and boiled. As I stood there, it surged up to my breast and extinguished the lights I carried on my person —only those escaping which were stuck miner-fashion, in my hat.

I shouted again, almost despairing of an answer. To my amaze, a voice answered close by, and, straining my eyes, I saw, crouching on a ledge of rock just flush with the water, two human figures.

One sat recumbent with his head against the wall; the other lay senseless, resting his head on the first one's lap. More like gnomes or wild beasts they seemed, dripping wet, and covered with filth and ooze. But even in the faint light I recognized them.

The man sitting was my uncle, John Pendragon. The man lying senseless was George Redruth.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE TWO MEN.

"HUGH, my lad!" said my uncle, stretching out his hands.

I waded through the water till I came close to him.

"Ay, here I am!" I answered. "Thank God you are safe; but *he*—is he dead or living?"

"Lawd knows!" was the reply. "He ha' lain like that these two hours, and I thought the waters were rising to wash us away."

So loud was the thunder on every side of us, that we had to shout at each other in order to be heard; and even our shouts sounded like mere whispers, though we were so close together.

I took a light from my hat, and reached out of the water, looked into the young master's face. It was ghastly pale, but there was a mark on the temple, as of blood. I put my hand upon his heart, and discovered that it was faintly beating.

"He lives still," I said; then, without more parley, I disengaged

myself from the rope, and proceeded to make it fast to the senseless man. As I did so, the water almost swept me away, but I held on to the rock and kept my place. When the rope was firmly secured under George Redruth's armpits, I shook him sharply, and, to my joy, he opened his eyes, partially recovering from his torpor.

Then I touched the rope, and pointed upward, making signs that he was to be drawn up. He seemed scarcely to understand; but, lifting him in my arms, I placed him in position, and then tugged three times, as a signal for the men to haul in.

There was a momentary pause; then the rope tightened, and the light body began slowly to ascend. Still waist-deep in the sea, I watched it journey upward—lax and loose as a dead thing, now rasping against the damp walls, now quivering and turning round and round, till it passed the first platform. Far, far above it, I saw the faint gleam from the spot where the men were gathered. At last it disappeared from sight, and I knew that, if life lasted, George Redruth was saved!

Then I clambered on the ledge beside my uncle, who was still lying in the same position, with his head leaning back against the dripping wall.

I took his hands in mine, and pressed them eagerly. As I did so, I saw, to my horror, that the breast of his mining-shirt was saturated with blood, that his face was ghastly white, and that there was on his lips a light stain of red.

"Are you hurt?" I said, with my lips close to his ear.

He inclined his head gently, and groaned as if in great pain.

It was neither the time nor the place to question him further; but I pressed his hand again in token of sympathy. Our eyes met, and his were full of some strange speechless sorrow.

Presently, I saw the rope descending, weighted with a small bar of iron; down it came till it touched the water's edge. I leaped down, and wading out, drew it toward the ledge.

"Uncle," I cried, "see?—it is your turn!"

And I pointed upward.

He shook his head feebly.

"Na, na, lad," he said. "Lea' me here to die!"

It was not to be thought of. Wildly, in dumb show, I besought him to make an effort to ascend, and at last he assented.

"I'll try, lad; I'll try!" he said. "But I doubt my back be broke. A lump o' rock fell on me as I were carrying young measter here."

I looked at him in surprise. To tell the truth, I had had a wild suspicion, ever since the news of the accident, that it might have been caused by foul play on my uncle's part. I knew him to be mad with trouble, and if by any chance he had discovered young Redruth's guilt, God alone knew what he might have done. But if he spoke the truth, and I knew well that he was not a man to lie, I had deeply wronged him. Instead of attempting to destroy, he had actually imperiled his own life to save the betrayer of his daughter's honor.

Gently and tenderly, I secured the rope around him, but he moaned with pain as I raised him to launch him upward. As the rope tightened, he uttered a cry of agony. However, it was too late to avoid the risk, and it was the last chance.

Supporting him in my arms as long as possible, I saw him drawn upward. When his full weight fell upon the rope his agony grew terrible, and I think he fainted away; for he hung in the air like a dead man, with limbs and arms pendent. I watched him rise slowly, and felt no little anxiety lest the rope should yield beneath his weight; for he was a heavy man, compared to whom George Redruth was a very feather.

However, the rope stood the test, and he was drawn safely up the abyss. After a long interval, during which I waited in sickening terror, with the waters thundering and the rocks quaking around me, the rope again descended. I seized it, secured it under my armpits, and, giving the signal, was drawn upward.

On reaching the bottom platform, I rested a moment; then I signaled again, and rose once more into the air. By this time the lights in my hat were extinguished, and I was in total darkness; but as I gained the middle platform, half a dozen hands were stretched out to grasp me, till tottering and trembling, I stood upon my feet.

Wildly and joyfully, the men surrounded me, almost kissing me in their rapture at my reappearance. I looked round for George Redruth. He had recovered from his faintness, they said, and had been helped by two of the men up to the mouth of the mine. But lying on the platform, his head supported on Michael Penmaur's knee, was my uncle, white and bleeding, like a man whose time had come.

I knelt by his side, and took his hand. He looked up into my face; and I saw that his eyes were filmy and dim. The air of the mine, even up there, was fetid and foul, and I saw that he breathed with difficulty.

"Hugh, my lad!" he said, faintly. "Come close—I want to whisper to 'ee. Can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you?" I cried, greatly moved. "What have I to forgive?"

"Listen, lad, and I'll tell 'ee!"

He paused, his head fell back, and I thought that he was gone; but the next moment he recovered, and gazed into my face again. Just then the two men who had gone up with George Redruth redescended, and one of them held out to me a flask of brandy. I took it eagerly, and held it to my uncle's lips. He drank a little, and the spirit seemed to revive him.

"Hugh! are you thar, my lad?"

"Yes," I answered, fairly sobbing.

"Is that your hand in mine?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Put down your head, and listen. I be dying, sure enough, and afore I die I want to ha' your forgiveness. They would ha' hung 'ee, lad, for what I did. 'Twas *I* that killed the overseer!"

I had guessed as much, but when the truth came from my uncle's own lips, I started in horror. He clutched my hand, as if fearing that I would shrink away.

"'Twere all on account o' my Annie, my poor little lass. We met out on the cliff beyant the mine, and I taxed him wi' bringing her trouble upon her, and he said summat that made me murdering mad. He said she were a light lass, light and bad; and, Lawd forgive me! afore I had time to think, I struck at 'un wi' my knife! Then he staggered back—'twere on the very edge of the crag—and the earth seemed to give way under him, and he went o'er—screaming—he went o'er to his death, on the rocks below. That was how it cam' about! I didn't mean to kill 'un, but 'twere done like a flash o' lightning—and the next marning—the next marning—they found 'un lying, dead and bloody, on the shore."

The confession came in stifled whispers, often so faint that I could scarcely hear; but other ears heard and understood it as well as mine, and when he ceased, a horrified murmur passed from man to man!

"May God forgive you!" I murmured, still bending over him.

He did not seem to hear me. His eyes were fixed on vacancy, his hand clutched mine like a vise. Suddenly he leaned forward, drew his hand from mine, and pointed.

"See there!" he cried. "'Tis hisself all bloody, and beckoning wi' his finger. And wha be that standing by 'un, all in white?

Annie! Annie, my lass! speak to father! speak to—speak to—father!"

The last word died away in his throat, where it met the death-rattle; there was a struggle, a last convulsion, and he fell back like a lump of lead.

I think I too must have lost my senses for a time. The next thing I remember was standing in the open air, and staggering like a drunken man, with kindly arms supporting me on either side. I looked round wildly. An excited crowd of women and men surrounded me; and close by, not far from the mine-mouth, the dead body of my uncle lay in the sunlight, with Annie and my aunt bending over it and bitterly weeping.

I sunk down upon a rock, and hid my face. When I looked up again, I saw George Redruth and his mother standing near me, and with them Madeline.

The young master seemed quite himself, though greatly agitated.

"Trelawney," he said, "this is a sad affair. Well, I owe you my life."

I looked him coldly in the face: his eyes sunk beneath my gaze.

"No, sir," I replied. "You owe your life to the poor martyr lying yonder, and you know best what cause he had to love you!"

"You are right," he said. "He began the task which you completed. When the outer rock gave way, and the sea rushed in upon us, I must have fainted; and Pendragon bore me to the place where you found me. I will take care that those he leaves behind are well rewarded."

Again I looked him in the face.

"Too late for that," I answered.

He returned my look, with something of the old dislike. All my spirit revolted against him, thinking of the sorrow he had wrought.

"It is well for you," I said, "that John Pendragon did not know what I know. Had he done so, perhaps he would have left you to the mercy of the sea."

"What do you mean?" cried Redruth, turning pale as death.

"Ask your own heart. God has spared you, and taken a better man. Had you met with your deserts, you would be lying in his place."

"Take care, Trelawney! I owe you my life, as I said, but—"

"You owe me nothing," I returned. 'I helped you, as I would have helped my bitterest enemy, at such a moment. But now that it is done, I almost wish it were undone; and *you* know why!"

With an impatient exclamation, he turned away.

"Come, mother! Come, Madeline! You see how this fellow hates me. I would gladly own my debt to him, but it is useless. Perhaps, when he is cooler, he will permit me to be of service to him. If not—why, I can not help it! Come!"

Mother and son walked slowly away, but Madeline did not stir. She remained where she had been, with her gentle eyes fixed on me.

George Redruth turned and saw her.

"Come, Madeline," he cried; "we are not wanted here."

"I think *I* am wanted," she replied. "Mr. Trelawney, shall I go?"

And as she spoke she held out both her hands to me with a loving gesture. I looked at her in wonder. Then suddenly the whole meaning of her attitude dawned upon me, and, taking her hands with a joyful cry, I drew her to my bosom.

Pale and trembling, George Redruth returned and confronted us.

"Madeline, what does this mean?"

"It means that I have found my love where you found your life—in the arms of this brave man!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

It was the supreme moment of my life; and, standing there before my darling, dazed and joyfully bewildered, with her beautiful face turned, radiant with love, on mine, well might I have echoed the ecstatic cry of the lover of lovers—

> "If it were now to die,
> 'Twere now to be most happy; for I fear,
> My soul hath her content so absolute,
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate!"

But the words which were bliss to me were gall and wormwood to the soul of George Redruth. Livid with pain, he looked at her who uttered them; then, glancing round at the wild groups surrounding us, he said,

"You must be mad to speak like that. Trelawney, a word with

you. There shall be an end to this once and forever; come apart, and let us speak together!"

He walked a short distance along the cliffs, I following, with Madeline by my side. When we were out of earshot of any soul there, he turned and faced us. His self-control was now remarkable; a stranger, looking at him, and observing his manner, would never have gathered that he was a prey to the acutest suffering of mortified pride and passion.

"I might have guessed this from the first," he said, in a low voice "You, Trelawney, always hated me—and God knows, I returned the compliment! I can see now why you saved my life. To crush and humiliate me before my cousin, over whose mind you have obtained some malign influence."

I looked at him, but made no reply. He continued, with apparent calmness, addressing Madeline:

"I am to understand, then, that our engagement is at an end?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Very well. You know as well as I what that means to me—ruin, perhaps disgrace; but I am not going to whine over the inevitable. Trelawney, I congratulate you," he added, with a curious smile, "you have won the game."

He turned as if to go, but Madeline, with an impulsive cry, interposed.

"George, do not talk like that!" she cried. "There is a chance yet of retrieving the past, and if you will do so, I shall still be your friend. It was not fated that I should ever be your wife; only one woman living has a right to that title, and to your atonement. Let me go to her! Let me tell her that you will make amends."

"I fail to understand you," he answered, coldly. "Of whom are you speaking?"

"Of Annie Pendragon, the poor girl whose heart you have nearly broken! You see I know everything. George—for my sake—"

His face darkened, while his lips twitched convulsively.

"How kind you are, how solicitous for my moral welfare! It is very good of you, I acknowledge, to offer to provide me with a helpmate, but I must politely decline your kind offices. Annie Pendragon is nothing to me. I am a gentleman, I believe; she is—"

"Take care!" I cried. "Utter one word against her, at your peril. I do not ask you now to acknowledge her—it is too late for that; and even if it could be, I think she is better as she is, than she could ever become, more closely united to a man like you. But she is sacred, and I forbid you even to utter her name."

"You mistake my meaning," he returned, still retaining his self possession. "All I was going to say was that we are not equals. I deeply regret what has occurred—I acknowledge my own folly—my own guilt, if you like it better; but from this time forth we are nothing to each other."

"George, George!" cried my darling in despair. "Have you no heart?"

"I suppose so, but blame yourself, if it is somewhat leaden on the present occasion. I am not used to humiliation, you see, and though I take my punishment as calmly as possible, I still feel it."

I could have strangled him, he was so utterly cold-blooded.

"If there is justice," I cried, "God will punish you! You have not only wrecked one life, but you have destroyed two others. Do you know that my uncle, God help him! confessed with his last breath that he had killed your accomplice, the man Johnson? That man's death, as well as John Pendragon's, lies at your door!"

He started in surprise, but conquered himself in a moment.

"I had my suspicions," he said; "but I was silent, for his daughter's sake! I fail to see, however, that I am responsible for the mad act of a murderer."

"*You* are the murderer, not *he*," I cried.

"Nonsense!" he answered, and still mastering himself, he walked away.

I turned and looked at Madeline. She was gazing after him, with a face pale as death.

"Madeline," I said, "do not think I am fallen so low as to presume upon the hasty words you spoke just now. I know that when this sorrowful day is over, you will forget them—you *must* forget them, in duty to yourself. It will be happiness enough for me to know that, when I most needed it, I had your sympathy; that if I had been other than I am, I might have had your love. And now, shall we say good-bye?"

I held out my hand to her; she gazed at me as if in wonder.

"Then you did not understand?" she said, gently. "Or perhaps—you *did* understand, and I was mistaken in thinking that you cared for me—so much?"

"Care for you?" I repeated, passionately. "Ever since I can remember, my heart, my whole life, has been yours. It is not *that!* My love, strong as it is, and ever has been, is not precious enough to purchase yours. Do not think that I am so lost, so selfish, as to think that the distance between us can be bridged over

by your heavenly pity. I am a poor man; you are a rich lady. I know what that means; I have known it from the beginning."

As I spoke, my heart was so stirred that I had to turn my face aside, to hide the gathering tears. But she crept close to me, and I felt the soft touch of her hand upon my arm.

"I do not blame you for thinking that," she said. "A little while ago, I thought so too; but Hugh, dear—may I call you so? God has opened my eyes. I think I always loved you; but never so much as to-day."

"Don't speak of it! It can't be! Oh, Madeline, let us say farewell!"

"Hugh, dear Hugh, listen! You *must* listen! Ah, do not be unkind!"

"Unkind—to *you!*" I murmured. "God knows I would die for you!"

"Had you died down in the mine, I should still have been faithful to you; I should never have loved another man. May I tell you the whole truth? I will, and you will understand. When I saw you going to your death—going, in your great goodness and noble courage, to save your enemy's life at the peril of your own—I knew for the first time that all my heart was yours. I did not deter you, but I prayed to God for you, and as I prayed, I swore before my God that, if He restored you to me I would lay my heart bare to you, and ask you to make me your wife. God was good; you came back, as from the grave. And now, will you turn away from me? Will you refuse me the one thing remaining that can make life sweet and sacred to me—your forgiveness, and your love?"

It was too much. The spell of the old passion came upon me, as, sobbing and trembling, I took my darling to my heart.

Thus it came to pass that I, Hugh Trelawney, a man of the people, became the accepted lover of Madeline Graham. Looking back at it all now, after a lapse of so many years, it still seems an incredible thing, unreal and visionary; but raising my eyes from the paper whereon these lines are written, I see beside me the sweet assurance that it is true. When I began the story of my life, I said that it was also the story of my love. It has lasted so long; it will last, God willing, till death, and after death.

"Is it not so, my darling?" She smiles, and bends over me, to kiss her answer. She watches the pen as it moves over the paper, and she waits for the last word, knowing my tale is almost done.

Love is by nature selfish; and in the first flush of my new joy I almost forgot the sorrow in our poor home. But when I quitted my darling, and joined the little procession which followed my poor uncle across the heath, I reproached myself for having felt so happy.

The miners had procured a rude stretcher, often used when accidents took place in the mine, and the dead body was laid upon it, with a cloak thrown lightly over it, to hide the piteous disfigured face set in its sad gray hair; but one hand hung uncovered, and this hand Annie held, as we walked slowly homeward, four of the men carrying the load. I followed, helping my aunt, who was simply heartbroken.

They bore him into the cottage, and women came to do the last sad offices. While they were thus occupied, I spoke to Annie, trying to console her. White as marble, and now quite tearless, she seemed like one whose reason had bereft her, under the weight of some violent physical blow. But when we went upstairs together, and saw my uncle lying as if asleep, his white hair decently arranged, his face composed, his thin hands folded on his breast, his whole expression one of mysterious peace, she knelt beside him and kissed his cold brow, and her tears again flowed freely. My aunt stood beside her, weeping and looking on.

"God has taken him!" I said, solemnly. "He is happy now."

"Ay, happy wi' God," sobbed my aunt. "Forty year we ha' dwelt together i' this house, and he ne'er gave me angry look or crass word. He be gawn, where I'll soon gang too. Wait for me, my bonnie man, wait for me—wait for her that loves 'ee, and is coming to 'ee soon!"

Why should I linger over this scene of sorrow, why should I turn to other scenes which followed it? Time and Death have healed all those wounds; to speak of them, is to open them again.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

A YEAR after the flooding of the mine and the death of John Pendragon, I married Madeline Graham. The ceremony took place quietly in London, whither we had gone together; and when it was over, we spent a brief honey-moon abroad. One spring morning, as I sat with my bride in an hotel by the Lake of Geneva, I read in the "Times" an announcement that filled my heart with surprise

and pain. It was an advertisement of the approaching sale by auction of Redruth House, St. Gurlott's, Cornwall.

A short time before this the mining company had passed into liquidation, and I knew that George Redruth was a ruined man. Little or no communication had passed between the cousins, but, when the crash came, Madeline, with my full consent and sympathy, had written to her aunt, offering her a considerable portion of her fortune for George Redruth's use and benefit. This offer had been refused. The next thing we had heard was that mother and son were living together in London, and closely following on that had come the news of the mother's death, an event which filled my darling with no little distress. To the last Mrs. Redruth had refused to forgive her niece, whom she unjustly held responsible for all the misfortunes which had fallen upon her son.

I showed my darling the newspaper, and we forthwith determined to journey down to Cornwall. Thus it happened that, about a week later, we arrived in St. Gurlott's, where we found Annie and my aunt ready to receive us at the old cottage. I then ascertained that George Redruth had left England for America, where he intended to remain. Annie, who was my informant, told me that before leaving the village he had sought her out to say farewell.

"And oh, Hugh," she cried, "he asked for my forgiveness, and I forgave him with all my heart. I think, if I had wished it, he would have taken me with him as his wife."

"You did not wish it?"

She shook her head sadly.

"No, Hugh. After what has happened, it was impossible, and I know it was more in despair and pity, than in love, that he spoke. I scarcely knew him; no one knew him—he was like the ghost of his old self; so worn, so broken, with the trouble and shame which have come upon him, that my heart bled for him."

"He is justly punished," I said sadly. "Annie, you did well. I am glad that he is penitent, but never in this world could you two have come together."

The reader already knows that, through my darling's goodness, I was a rich man. Now, of all men living, perchance, I best knew the capabilities of the St. Gurlott's Mine. Reckless neglect and ignorance had wrecked it, and it was still to some extent at the mercy of the sea; but I had my own theory that more than one fortune was yet to be discovered there. I spoke to Madeline about it; we went into the matter *con amore;* and the result was an offer was

made by me for the old claim to the official liquidator of the company. Things looked despairing, and as my offer was a liberal one, it was accepted. Within another year a fresh company was formed with Hugh Trelawney, Esq., as projector, vendor, and chief owner; large sums were expended in the improvements which, if carried out, would long before have saved the concern; the sea was gently persuaded to yield up possession; and before long the old mine was flourishing prosperously, a source of prosperity to all concerned in it, and of blessing to the whole population.

Another fact remains to be chronicled. We bought Redruth House, and it became our home. There my aunt and Annie joined us, dwelling happily with us, till, in due season, my aunt died. Annie lived on, and still lives, a pensive, gracious woman, full of one overshadowing memory, and devoted to our children. The last time she heard of George Redruth, he was a well-to-do merchant, living in the far-away West.

Thus, through the goodness of God, I remained in the old home able to help those who in time of need had helped me. St. Gurlott's is now a happy, thriving place; my dear wife is idolized by the simple people; and, I, in the fullness of my fortunate days, am the Master of the Mine.

THE END.

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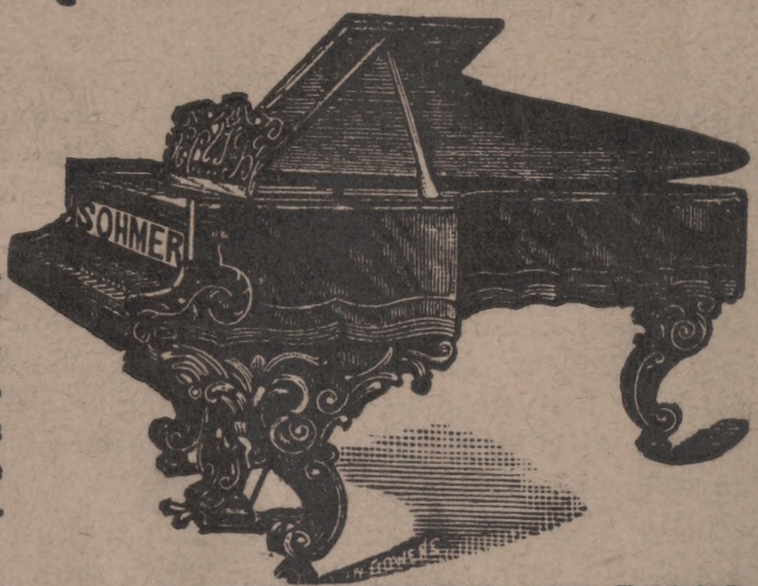

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